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## A LONG RETROSPECT

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*Photo: Whitlock*

Anstey Guthrie with Mac  
Taken in 1930

# **A LONG RETROSPECT**

**BY**

**F. ANSTEY**

**[THOMAS ANSTEY GUTHRIE]**

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## *Preface*

### A LONG RETROSPECT

**T**HE reminiscences of a man of over seventy-six necessarily cover a considerable number of years, and when I think how many persons of distinction I had the privilege of meeting during the greater part of my life I confess I feel somewhat ashamed when I realize how little I have found to say about them, and discover a certain resemblance between what I have written and the 'devilish interesting' anecdotes of Thackeray's Captain Sumph.

But one may meet people and even meet them fairly often, without ever becoming at all intimate with them, and in the few cases in which I have been more fortunate I have no fear that my recollections contain anything that could hurt the feelings of any one living.

In dealing with my career as an author I have no doubt dwelt at greater length than some would consider was required on the inception and the fortune, good or bad, of every one of my performances, most of which must be unknown to the present generation.

I have done so, not because I overrate their importance, as to which I am under no illusions, but for the reason that, in the circumstances, I could not well write my autobiography in any other way.

For my life has had no adventures, and no vicissitudes; such incidents as have happened in it have been the experiences of any author who has been fairly popular in his day and has enjoyed his work.

They can hardly be expected to have much interest or value except for those who know my books, or who are strongly inclined as I was to make writing their profession.

So that I cannot expect *A Long Retrospect* to be widely read, though, as it will not be published—assuming that it ever finds a publisher—until after my death, that concerns me little if at all.

I may further explain that in my opening chapters I felt that a faithful picture of a middle-class home in the early sixties might be worth giving, and tried to give one.

And, *Vice Versâ* being after all the only book with which I am generally associated, I considered myself justified in describing my own school-days more fully than they would otherwise deserve.

If I have not told the whole truth—and who does or who could in any autobiography?—I can at least claim I have set down nothing that, to my knowledge, is untrue or in the least exaggerated.

And with that I leave these reminiscences to such fate as may be in store for them.

F. ANSTEY

MARCH 1933

### *Editors' Note*

'A LONG RETROSPECT' was written between October 1929 and March 1933, when the above preface was added. Only a small portion of the work was ever revised or brought up to date by its author, and it is hoped that this fact will be borne in mind if the style should appear in places less polished than is the case with his other published work; it will also explain a few inconsistencies, notably the reference on p. 78 to the late Sir Sidney Low as still living, whereas in fact he predeceased the writer by two years. Some condensation and rearrangement of the material was unavoidable, but the editors did not feel justified in making more than a few minor changes in the actual wording, such as the substitution on the same page of the words 'in 1924' (the year of Dr. Pollard's retirement) for the author's 'some four years ago', a date which is misleading in 1936. Acknowledgements are duly made to the owners of the copyrights of the various portraits reproduced, but in the case of the illustration of the dinner scene from *The Man from Blankley's* it has been impossible to trace the present ownership.

FEBRUARY 1936

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## I

### *Early Childhood*

**I** WAS born on the 8th of August 1856 at 7 St. George's Terrace, Gloucester Road, a row of four-story houses which has long been replaced by St. George's Mansions. At least I have always understood that I was born there, though, for all I know, my parents may not have moved to St. George's Terrace until after my birth.

My father was a military tailor, and carried on his business then, and until his death in 1889, at 12 Cork Street, Burlington Gardens.

The business was a flourishing one by the time my father married, and increased considerably in subsequent years.

He married my mother in 1855; her maiden name was Augusta Amherst Austen, and she was twenty-eight and five years his junior when she married him. Her father was a not over-successful draper, and her mother was, I think, of Irish extraction.

My grandfather on my father's side had, I have heard, a flourishing business as a carrier, and left his widow with at all events enough to live on in comfort, though little, if any, of his money came to my father at her death.

Either my grandfather or his father came originally from Forfarshire.

My immediate forbears obviously were not only undistinguished but frankly plebeian, and yet—thanks to my mother—there was nothing in our home life and surroundings to put us at a disadvantage in later years with those whose birth was unconnected in any way with Trade. For my mother was in many respects an accomplished woman. She had been a distinguished student at the Royal Academy of Music as a pianist, though owing

to the smallness of her hands her execution was not quite brilliant enough for platform purposes. For some years she had been earning a fair income as a professional pianist and organist, by giving lessons, and playing at various churches. But all this was given up on her marriage. She had a thorough knowledge of Harmony, but, so far as I know, her only musical composition was a hymn which, with her maiden name, was included until a few years ago in the index of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*.

Partly owing to her mother, who spoke French fluently, and partly to an old Frenchman who taught her, she had a perfect French accent, although she had never lived in or even been to France. Nor—much as she would have enjoyed it—did she ever go, for my father could never be induced to go abroad until after her death.

She read Italian, but I never heard her speak it, and in drawing and painting she was far above the usual amateur level of her day at least as a copyist, for she could copy an engraving or lithograph in crayon or colour so perfectly that her work could not be distinguished from the original. Her drawing, however, was not creative; she seldom sketched from life or nature, though we possess one exquisitely drawn portrait by her of my grandmother.

As a girl my mother must have been pretty, and was still so in my early recollections of her; her expression was gentle and sweet, and she never lost her figure or the colour of her hair, which she always wore in the plain bandeaux of the fifties, to the end of her days.

She had always suffered from excessive shyness, though this did not cause her to lose her self-possession in any society; in speech and manner she was unmistakably a gentlewoman, her taste in literature and art was always sound, and she had a delightful sense of humour. To the end of her days she adored my father, who loved and valued her almost as much as she deserved, though he was not demonstrative and was inclined to think that her chief

claim to consideration was that of being his wife. But this did not trouble my mother, who probably was of the same opinion, and I never remember anything approaching a quarrel or a contest of wills between them.

In person my father was short and broad, fresh coloured, and well turned out; there were no bathrooms in St. George's Terrace, but he was exceptional, for those days, in his habit of the daily tub. He kept himself in health by walking to or from business every day, but took no other form of exercise. His disposition was genial, and, though he was prudent in money matters, he was never mean or niggardly, but open-handed on occasions when he thought fit, which were frequent.

He could not be called a well-educated man, but his English was correct and free from any trace of either the Cornish or Cockney accent; he had read a good deal as a young man; and Shakespeare, Pope, Gray, Scott, Dickens, and Thackeray he knew thoroughly well. He was independent and outspoken, and it was impossible to imagine him as obsequious to any one; his customers liked and respected him, many of them became his personal friends, and—which I think is unusual in the case of a tradesman—accepted his invitations to luncheon or dinner.

His sense of humour was genuine, though not so subtle as my mother's, and in our country holidays, when we saw most of him, we children found him a delightfully amusing companion.

I was his eldest son; eighteen months later came my brother Leonard, and in following years my youngest brother Walter and my sister Edith.

Some people's memories go back, I believe, to the time when they were two, or even younger. Exactly how far mine go back I do not know, but I should say I was at least three at the time they begin.

I can just remember a nurse I had, and of whom I was very fond, when I must have been about that age; how she

had to leave, and how one night she reappeared in my nursery and kissed me and we both cried.

I have an impression that she was young and pretty, and had to leave because she was discovered flirting in Kensington Gardens with a soldier while I was somewhere in the distance and temporarily forgotten. But of course I knew nothing of this at the time, and may not have accurately remembered whatever I heard later; I doubt if she would have returned to see me at all if she had had to leave in disgrace.

Probably a few months later I have a memory of the sea-front at Brighton, and of feeling vaguely terrified by the dazzle and heave of the unfamiliar sea, and depressed by the smell of tar; also of walking on the Old Chain Pier, which also, for some reason, had a depressing effect on me, and of being fascinated at a stall near the entrance by a pile of giant Bristol glass marbles with coloured spirals inside them.

Then, in the following year, of a night scene at Margate, an open-air fête with coloured lamps and fireworks, when, on seeing my father apparently walking straight into a fiery cascade, I broke out in yells of grief which were sadly misunderstood by a lady near me, who pointed out that her little girl was not in the least frightened, and that a boy should be ashamed to be such a coward. I didn't, and probably couldn't, explain, and soon afterwards had the joy of seeing my father return, like Shadrach or Meshech, unsinged from the furnace.

Again, of a Sunday morning in December 1861; I had just started for church with my father and mother, when we were met by the local doctor, who told us that the Prince Consort was dead, and though I doubt if I knew who or what the Prince Consort might be, I gathered from what was said that a great calamity had befallen us.

A year further on, and I have a memory of standing with my nurse and Leonard, who was just old enough to



be a companion, at the top of Queen's Gate, to see the State carriages driving to the opening of the 1862 Exhibition—magnificent coaches, with armorial hammer-cloths and panels, and gorgeous coachmen and footmen, such as are almost if not quite extinct nowadays for all but Royalty and the Lord Mayor of London.

We were taken more than once to the Exhibition, where I remember that an enormous lighthouse reflector made of gleaming glass shutters gave me inexplicable pleasure, as did a long row of locomotives which I thought gigantic, though none of them probably would be big enough for a local line in these days.

There was a large doll's house standing in its own gardens, and near one of the entrances an immense fountain of coloured majolica, which was much admired and would probably be considered rather hideous nowadays. It played scent supplied by a leading firm of perfumers, and I remember it because it was by its margin that an aunt gave me my very first tip of half a crown, which I put in a pocket of my white waistcoat without any of the satisfaction I should have felt had I been a year or two older. I don't think I attached any particular meaning to coins in 1862, possibly because any presents in money were applied for my benefit in some way in which I was not personally consulted.

In the Picture Gallery I remember my brother Leonard distinguishing himself in front of a painting representing a small boy endeavouring to reach some article on a high shelf by mounting a pile of thick volumes he had placed on a chair. At the sight of which Leonard exclaimed in a small shocked voice: 'Mamma! he's standing on the *Bible!*' I think we must have been warned by a severe nurse that a fearful punishment awaited any one guilty of such irreverence. He was a pretty boy—which could certainly not be said of me—with long fair hair and a distinct look of the lowest cherub in Reynolds's

well-known group—so I fancy the bystanders must have been greatly edified by his youthful piety. But the remark was not at all characteristic of him.

In 1863 I have a faint recollection of driving in an open carriage across Westminster Bridge, the parapets of which were lined with flaming cressets, and through streets hung with flags and garlands, past shops above which were huge crystal Prince of Wales's feathers magically twinkling with gas jets in honour of the Royal Marriage with Princess Alexandra. Her portraits were everywhere, and I rightly concluded that she must be as lovely a princess as any in my fairy tales.

Another early memory is of being taken across the Park to the Marble Arch, where a tram-line to Bayswater and Notting Hill had just been laid down; the cars were hauled up by ropes, but ran down the incline of their own impetus.

Unfortunately the inventor, an American named George Francis Train, had raised his tram-lines above the level of the road, which proved so injurious to other wheeled traffic that the first London tramway had a very brief existence.

I remember standing near the Marble Arch with a sense that I was seeing something rather wonderful, but I have no distinct mental picture of what I actually saw.

My memories of the house in St. George's Terrace are all pleasant. It was not very large, but there was a charming double drawing-room on the first floor, from the back of which was a view over our garden wall of a grass court, where people occasionally came to be photographed on horseback. All the houses had little front gardens, and in ours were japonica bushes which in summer were full of pink blossom.

It is odd how as I sit here, an old man, sending my memory back to days that are nearly seventy years past,

little isolated scenes that have lain unremembered in my mind ever since come back to me as vivid vignettes. All trivial, and of interest to none but myself. Still I shall set some of them down for what they may be worth—which is probably less than nothing.

I am at tea in my nursery and rather bored. Suddenly my mother comes in, and everything is bright and cheerful again. She is in a blue and white striped dress with full sleeves—it may have been what was known as *barège*—and she has brought me some tiny cakes. Some have five-pointed crowns with angelica on them. Others are like bunches of filberts. I don't altogether approve of their flavour, but they belong to the world of grown-ups, and there is an enchantment about them that makes them palatable. When the table is cleared my mother cuts out a row of little paper ladies in crinolines and with joined hands. She blows, and they glide across the table to me as if moved by magic.

It is early evening or late afternoon in summer. I have just come back from Kensington Gardens with my nurse. Before I had started for the walk I had been lamenting to my mother over the wreck of a tiny wooden train—a primitive affair, such as no modern toy-shop would stock. The carriages are solid wooden blocks pierced at their bases with little metal axles on which are yellow wheels, also of wood. It is supposed to run down a grooved inclined plane supported by trestles, and would do so if only the train would keep the track, which it never does. Consequently most of the wheels have come off and the train will run no longer. But my mother has promised that all will be well by the time I return, though this sounds so impossible that I can hardly believe that even she can perform it. I am at the gate, where the pink japonica bushes are in flower, the front door opens, and my mother comes down the flagged path to meet me; she is carrying a large tea-tray, and on the tray is my train,

rolling as well as ever it did, with a dab of red sealing-wax securing the centres of all the wheels. The impossible has happened after all.

I am learning to read; before me on a table at the window is my reading-book; it has a picture of two sheep standing on a circular slab of rock. The slab suggests a slice of suet pudding, which I abhor, and the association produces a sudden revolt against the art of reading, and a resolve that nothing shall induce me to acquire it.

It is dusk and I am sitting at the same window with my mother, who is singing a lullaby from the German to me. In the chemist's window opposite three great jewels, sapphire, topaz, and emerald, are glowing, and while I listen their splendour gives me a mysterious joy.

Ours was a happy childhood; as soon as my brother and I were old enough we were taught to read and write by my mother, who managed to make lessons as pleasant as they can ever be to small boys. I was fairly intelligent, but not at all precocious; it was not until I was nearly seven that I read to amuse myself, though after that age I devoured any book that came in my way. I don't think I could write anything but copies until I was about eight. We had patent penholders fitted with plates for the fingers, which only succeeded in cramping mine and made me detest penmanship. In later life, however, the mere manual act of writing has always given me a certain sensuous satisfaction.

Between lessons there were walks with my mother in Kensington Gardens, or along the lanes through orchards and market gardens, which then lay between what are now Cornwall Gardens and the Boltons. Our nursery was well supplied with toys, though, instead of a rocking-horse, we had a large and fearsome beast with a skin coat, mounted on three wheels, propelled by iron pedals, and guided by a handle-bar on the top of his head. We pre-

ferred to leave our horse outside on the landing, and when, grown more enterprising, we mounted him in the garden of our new house he gave us some nasty tosses.

The street was a quiet one in those days, though it occasionally provided interest and excitement of a kind that it has ceased to furnish for some sixty years.

Sometimes a Marionette Show, on wheels and drawn by a pony, would give a performance in front of our windows, and I watched the performance with mingled delight and terror. The ballet of four spangled dolls was a pleasant spectacle enough, but I knew from experience that it would be followed by the appearance of a creature whose head would rise high out of his collar, to be succeeded by a second, and that by a third head, each more hideous than the last. And last came a skeleton that danced, and then discarded, first its skull, and then each of its limbs, which all jerked about in spirited independence of its torso. I sat the skeleton out, but I never learned to like it. At times a performing monkey would go through his tricks on a tripod table with a red cloth top, an exhibition which only survives now in the drawings of John Leech. There was also a foreigner with a little organ, in the front of which tiny puppets danced to the music, but these were too small to incite alarm, though I had an impression that there was something uncanny about them.

And a turbaned Indian with a tom-tom, who walked by chanting what sounded like 'Ah! la! Bah! la! Hooli-goo!' I knew I should probably meet him again in my next nightmare—and I frequently did.

On May Day 'Jack in the Green' with his troupe came bobbing and swaying past, and, on the fifth of November, the most terrifying guys, and provided more nightmares.

Wheel traffic, in Kensington at all events, was a very mild and occasional event in those days. In these it has long disposed of every street performance except that

of Punch and Judy. At the corner of the street, and of a good many streets for that matter, an old apple-woman sat at her stall and seemed to occupy her post rather by right than privilege, for no policeman ever suggested that she should move on.

Policemen, as I remember them first, wore top hats with a metal bar on each side, and I think white trousers in summer. I know I was troubled when, about 1865, they all went into helmets, which not only offended the Conservatism common to all children, but proved too difficult to draw on a slate.

Like all London middle-class families, we spent some weeks every summer in the country, which for some years I did not find particularly enjoyable.

My only memory of an early stay at Freshwater in the Isle of Wight is certainly not a pleasant one. I was unwell and had been ordered a dose of castor-oil; having had previous experience of that remedy I firmly declined to repeat it. On the sitting-room mantelpiece between two lustres of bilious green glass, which I remember associating in dislike with the castor-oil, were two little alabaster or marble cannons on gun-carriages, and these were offered me by our kind old landlady as a reward if I would swallow the loathly dose. So I yielded, but I never got the cannons because my father, very properly—not that I thought so then—would not hear of my accepting them.

On the green at Littlehampton in 1862 I fell in love with the daughter of a Canon Povah, who was of course a year or two my senior. But she must have had a tenderness of some sort for me, because she insisted on presenting me with so priceless a gift as a cheap kaleidoscope. Unfortunately, my father's strict views on this subject deprived me of this treasure also, and I had to return it to the beloved donor, and, unless I mistake, we were never quite on the same terms again.

In the next summer we were at Folkestone, where I

look back on myself lying on the lodging-house sofa and making my first acquaintance with *Robinson Crusoe* and the footprint on the sand. I remember climbing a conical hill which was called, whether locally or by us alone I don't know, 'The Sugar-Loaf Mountain', and visits to the Cherry Gardens, long since absorbed by the suburbs, where we had milk and cake at little tables under the trees, on which, at that time of the year at all events, there were no cherries. I remember a toy-shop at Hythe, outside which were displayed a quantity of German wooden toys in oval boxes, among which I was allowed to choose; there was an artillery train that took my fancy at first, but I finally decided on a camp as containing more figures.

Some fifty years later, in the Basle Historical Museum, I came upon an exhibit in a case of toys labelled 'Basler Artillerie. 1840'; it was precisely similar to the gun and limber I had rejected in 1862, and I realized once more—for the camp turned out to be disappointing—that I had chosen unwisely.

These were not the only toys which were once to be seen in most nurseries and are now in their way 'Museum pieces'. I had a wooden sailing-boat which, balanced below by a curved wire ending in a ball, rocked on the top of a pedestal; in the boat sat a solitary sailor with a wooden tub and box as his cargo. After prolonged efforts I contrived to dislodge both sailor and cargo, but the result was unsatisfactory as they never could be induced to fit in neatly again. There was a little troop of cavalry, too, mounted on a box and capable of rearing mildly when a handle was turned, which also produced a feeble and oddly depressing tinkle. And there were improbable looking plaster animals on wedge-shaped bellows which supplied them with even less convincing bleats. And skip-jacks, which would jump a foot or two into the air on being compressed, and Jacks-in-the-box, which, if they survive at all, have evolved into less unsophisticated forms.

I remember, too, an excellent stable and a bridge, both of which had to be built with separate numbered pieces—an undertaking which, being entirely without the requisite constructive ability, I left to grown-ups.

For use on Sundays—though I think we were allowed no toys of any kind on that day—there were ‘Scripture bricks’, small oblong pieces of wood with a Biblical incident on one side and a text on the other. We employed them for purely secular purposes, but it must be a long time now since they were last to be found in the most orthodox nurseries.

In the autumn of 1863 we moved from St. George’s Terrace to No. 6 Phillimore Gardens, which had not long been built.

My brother Leonard and I were given hospitality at our aunt’s at Hamilton Terrace while the move into our new home was going on, so that I did not see it until all the rooms were habitable.

I thought it very splendid indeed; there was a strange but exciting smell of varnish in the Nursery, and I was greatly impressed by the amber glass handle of the new cupboard. The drawing-room was particularly imposing, with its big cut-glass gaselier, its Broadwood grand piano, cabinets, and crimson damask sofa and chairs, or rather so it seemed to me then, and it did not occur to me till long afterwards that our old drawing-room in St. George’s Terrace was far more restful. However, the new one was merely furnished in the style that was considered—by upholsterers—correct for the typical middle-class drawing-room of that period. Ours was not artistic, but at least it had nothing in it that was actually hideous, and later on, as relations by marriage died who had a pretty taste for old china, it contained some really good pieces of Sèvres and Dresden.

The dining-room had the inevitable deep red flock paper and heavy black marble mantelpiece, on which stood



two big bronze Marli horses; another bronze, Chiron the Centaur teaching some one—could it be Apollo?—stood on the top of an old but unbeautiful walnut secretaire by the window. There was an elaborate gaselier, in which four bronze sea-horses bore the globes on their heads; the horses were quite well modelled, and, for a gaselier, I do not think the design was at all bad.

The pictures—as my father's taste in Art, especially when my mother was allowed a voice, was, though unenterprising, quite sound—were above the average. There were two large landscapes which he attributed to Patrick Nasmyth, and may have been right in doing so—they were certainly by a painter of merit; and there was a genuine and very fine Morland—two horsemen riding away from the spectator past a big oak on the right of the picture; within a few years there were also water-colour drawings by Sutton Palmer, Williamson, Brierly, and Cattermole Junr., all of them pleasant in colour and feeling.

A smaller room at the back, known as the Breakfast Room, was the one we lived in most and liked best; my father built out a small conservatory to it, and in summer its benches were ablaze with big spotted calceolarias, pelargoniums, and fuchsias.

Our schoolroom, which was also our playroom, was in the basement, separated by a narrow area from the back garden. There my mother taught us from the usual books—Mrs. Markham's *Histories*, *Reading without Tears*, *Near Home*, and *Far Away*, a good illustrated geography of Europe, the title of which I forget, Darnell's copybooks, and Wright's *Arithmetical Tables*; later we began French and even Latin grammar. Our lessons were leisurely and easy-going affairs, for she was no disciplinarian, but, somehow, by the time we three boys went to school we had become thoroughly well grounded, and our writing and spelling at all events were much above the average.

We had our music lessons on a cottage piano in the Breakfast Room: my brother Leonard learnt quickly and had a charming singing voice, while I, though I stumbled for several months through Haydn's 'Surprise', 'Lilla's a Lady' and other simple pieces, never fully grasped the relation between the notes on the score and the keys of the piano, and was eventually—much to my relief—allowed to give up music. My youngest brother Walter proved equally unmusical, but my sister became an excellent pianist.

In the Nursery we were under the despotic rule of a nurse whose name was Fanny Channer—a dark, sallow, hard-featured woman of about thirty. We were fond of her and, after her peculiar fashion, she was fond of us—but she led us a hard life. Before she came to us she had been a nurse at an orphan asylum, and she never outgrew an impression that stern discipline was what we required. At breakfast our porridge, for which I conceived an incurable dislike, was served with nothing to make it more palatable, and I was compelled to swallow it, protest and bellow as I might, though by the time we were in Phillimore Gardens I had successfully rebelled against that cereal. Fanny also issued a breakfast edict that any crusts we had left overnight were to be eaten before we touched our bread and butter, and we obeyed, until at last my father accidentally discovered this prohibition and put an end to it.

We had plenty of wooden bricks and the usual liking for building with them, but Fanny, for no particular reason, made a rule that only six long bricks and twelve short ones were to be permitted, which did not give us much scope for architecture.

There were various other small tyrannies; on dinner-party nights we were allowed—as children were in those days—to delight or embarrass the guests by appearing at dessert, and, after going through a painful process of

washing and dressing, we were obliged to sit for an hour or so perfectly quiet with a book. The book with which I usually passed this vigil was an illustrated catalogue of Messrs. Mappin and Webb's plated goods. I found the engravings of shell- or fiddle-patterned spoons and forks, toast racks, and cruet-stands curiously solacing in some unaccountable way.

Somehow none of these petty oppressions, of which these are only instances, lessened our affection for Fanny; it never occurred to us that she was going at all beyond her authority, or that we had any cause for complaint.

Our favourite nursery toys were tin soldiers; they were sold in square wooden boxes with sliding lids, which had improbable but thrilling battle-pictures on them. Inside these was a little compartment for a cannon, and another for dried peas; the rest of the box contained the rival armies on a disproportionate amount of shavings. 'Rules of Warfare' were pasted inside the lid. A captain was worth six points to the gunner whose shot laid him low, a standard-bearer four, and so on. But flat enemies not being easily bowled over, we disregarded the rules. The first box I remember contained Federal and Confederate troops with their respective colours.

I was playing with these one afternoon when a visitor appeared; she was a stout old lady in sealskins and black silk with a grey moustache and heavy dewlaps like a bloodhound's. We did not enjoy being kissed by her, but we recognized that she meant us well. On this particular visit of hers Leonard happened to be engaged with a book, and Fanny, in whose black books I probably was at the time, informed the old lady that he was 'so fond of a book', while I 'wasted my time over silly little tin soldiers'. As a matter of fact he was no more studious than I was, and quite as fond of tin soldiers, so I thought her statement a trifle biased; but I did not venture to contradict it—that was not done in our nursery.

However, the next day I blessed her injustice, for an immense box of soldiers, representing the Allies and Russians in the Crimean War, arrived from our kind old friend for me, and a small book, inscribed 'For the little boy who is so fond of reading', for my disgusted brother.

We divided the soldiers, and, though the book proved to be all poetry, which we condemned—I think justly—as silly, each poem was illustrated by the most delightful little woodcuts by Ludwig Richter of pretty pig-tailed children playing in tiny kitchens with odd-shaped jugs and pots, sleepy cats, and fluffy white Pomeranian dogs.

I can see those woodcuts still, and recall a verse of no remarkable merit which accompanied one of them:

*Big Puss and little Puss  
Sat beneath the roses,  
The roses smelt so pleasantly  
To both their little noses.*

Which confirms my impression that our critical instinct was not far out as regards this particular poet.

I remember that Fanny tried to convince me that my present was intended to convey a covert rebuke, but I knew enough of the dear old lady to disbelieve that, and in any case I could put up with any amount of rebuke in that form; so I had a comfortable sense that, for once, our stern nurse had failed to score.

In the summer we set out with her while the morning was comparatively cool for Kensington Gardens, where we were free to amuse ourselves by the Broad Walk, while she sat conversing with other nurses on a circular bench under one of the big trees, generally on the subject of the misdoings of their respective charges.

There were a few thrilling days one summer when we found that the whole of the Broad Walk had suddenly become a Tom Tiddler's ground, for it was thickly strewn with treasure in the shape of exquisitely tinted little sea-

shells, which were ours for the gathering. Until the morning when we arrived, eager for more, to find that all our riches had been rolled into glittering powder.

Near the Broad Walk is St. Govor's Well, associated for all Meredithians with Richard Feverel, and now no longer much resorted to or even noticed. But in those days there was a summer-house near it, where an old woman in a very clean white apron stood by a table dispensing tumblers of chalybeate water for a penny a glass. We drank it at the source from an iron ladle or a shining tin cup, and thought it rather nasty, but interesting.

We had some friends of about our own age, besides our cousins at Hamilton Terrace.

One, whom I shall call Clarence Young, was three years younger than I was. His father was an agent for various goods, and travelled a good deal on the Continent; his mother was the person whom, next to our own mother, we liked best to be with. The Youngs were pleasant kindly people—not particularly cultured, but not in the least 'common'.

Clarence was an only son, and though we enjoyed going to his house, I'm afraid it was not entirely for the pleasure of his society.

His nursery was much better stocked, and with more ingenious and interesting toys, than our own. One of them was a fire-engine, and we spent exciting afternoons at his house in Addison Road building fires in the garden and putting them out. The garden, I remember, had cherries and passion flowers growing on the walls. The house is still there, but I doubt if the fruit and flowers are.

We went for walks together in Kensington Gardens, and rather pitied Clarence because, for the sake of his complexion, his face had to be protected by a blue veil. However, as he didn't like being accosted by rude street boys as 'blue-bottle', he was allowed to walk unveiled after a few days of martyrdom.

As he grew older we had many tastes in common; magic lanterns, for example, and a toy theatre. He played the piano much better than we did, and was an expert at croquet. We would go to play croquet with him, and he would hit our balls all over the small lawn, while we pretended—not very successfully—that we didn't care.

I don't think that we ever liked him very much, or that he liked us, but we got on quite comfortably together.

We went to Christmas parties at the Youngs', at first at their house in Scarsdale Villas, and later in Addison Road. There was always a Christmas-tree on the tea-table, and afterwards a magic-lantern show in a room upstairs; I can visualize some of the slides still, and remember the pang with which I read the final 'Good Night' in floral letters.

At one of these parties before the distribution of presents the Christmas-tree caught fire, and half of it, presents and all, was consumed as we sat there looking on; all I remember now is that the grown-ups kept their heads, and that there was no panic.

On Boxing Day, 1864, we drove to the Crystal Palace, to which the road then led for some miles between hedges and trees. I thought it an enchanted place, and it certainly had attractions in those days which it has long since lost. Nadar's Giant Balloon was swaying in the nave; there were toy models of it at a stall close by, and I longed to have one, but my father—not without reason—decided that it would be too fleeting a possession, so I was given a box of soldiers (in Prussian blue with spiked helmets) by way of consolation.

Then there was the Tropical Wing, which was really beautiful, with big spreading palms, reproductions of the Alhambra and other courts, and, towering up some sixty or seventy feet at least, two immense seated Egyptian deities in gay colours, with inscrutably smiling chocolate faces. In another part of the Palace were life-size

groups of savages of various tribes which I liked less, not having realized before that such unpleasant-looking people existed. I think these groups are still there; they were on the last occasion I visited the Palace, though they had grown distinctly shabbier. They may have been removed by now as no longer providing either instruction or amusement. I found them depressing myself.

I remember that visit because of something that happened in the early morning of the next day. Leonard and I shared a bedroom at the back of the house, and I was awakened by some noise outside, and saw that the drawn window blind was lit up by a strange red glow which did not look like any kind of sunrise.

I woke Leonard and we went to the window and drew the blind, when we discovered that a large wooden shed, used by the workmen who were building Stafford Terrace, was blazing furiously, the flames rising almost to the level of our roof and making our window panes so hot that we could not bear our hands on them. We were, of course, terrified, and as the wind was driving burning pieces of wood and sparks over our roof, I imagine that there was a real danger that the fire would reach us across our very limited back garden. My mother came in and soothed us, and we watched the fire together for a while. Then we were transferred to the night nursery in the front of the house, and I remember lying awake, watching the shower of sparks falling into Phillimore Gardens, and thinking that they were exactly like a fall of fiery snow.

The fire was got under in a few hours, but not until the big shed and all it contained were utterly destroyed. I have a recollection of playing with my Prussian soldiers when I came downstairs that morning, and of finding little joy in them. My world had suddenly become insecure, and not even tin soldiers could restore my confidence in it. But naturally that state of mind did not last long—the

fire was soon no more than a not unpleasantly exciting memory.

One afternoon in early summer, as my brother and I were going down the stairs which led to the back garden, we noticed a little girl of about our own age in the garden adjoining ours.

She was prancing round it with a high action, and shaking her short and rather tangled mane. Presently she looked up and saw us and explained that she was the winner of that year's Derby—'Gladiator' I think it was.

Privately we thought this statement extravagant, but we were too polite to contradict her, and a conversation began which she made more intimate by getting up—I fancy by a ladder—and sitting astride the party wall. We were rather priggish small boys, and her free and easy manners were contrary to our notions of propriety. Still, she was only a girl, and we made allowances for her. I suppose my mother must have written to hers, for she came in once or twice to tea with us, and I believe my mother was sorry for her.

I gathered somehow, probably from remarks I overheard from my nurse, that Kitty, as she was called, was a neglected child. Her father was a wealthy contractor of sorts, much older than his wife. There was an elder daughter, and she and her mother were always out, driving to races, parties, and various gaieties, Kitty being left to her own devices.

Kitty's mother, however, must have been grateful to ours, for my brother and I were asked to come to tea next door. The drawing-room we were taken up to was almost the counterpart of ours; we were presented to the elder daughter, who was charming to us.

I can't remember her face in the least, but I do recollect that she put a coal on the fire with her own hand, and that her hand was a very white and pretty one, and the coal smudged her fingers. I don't know why I didn't fall in



love with her, as, like boys of that age, I generally fixed my affections on persons at least ten years my senior. But I thought her laugh was silly, and I'm afraid it was. She had a *fiancé* called Edward, who I think appeared on that occasion, and oddly enough I can see *his* face quite distinctly—a good-looking vacuous face it was, with black whiskers.

She addressed him generally as 'Fright', as Mercy Pecksniff did Jonas, but I doubt whether she had ever heard of those persons.

After that afternoon we were often invited to children's parties there; once there were private theatricals, and the elder daughter was 'Beauty', and Edward the Beast. I have an impression of thinking that he was not nearly beastly enough in the character, but all that I clearly remember of the entertainment is the smell of the footlights, which had a flavour of coco-nuts.

There were splendid presents at these parties: one year I received a mahogany cup and ball and a miniature box of dominoes; another, among other things, a case of coloured chalk pencils enamelled to match each colour—a gift which, though not so sumptuous, was much more to my taste.

I suppose Kitty must have been at these parties, but I think she was kept in the background. The father was wheeled about in a chair, paralysed, and I fancy imbecile, for no one seemed to speak to him.

Sometimes the mother and elder daughter would come home late at night and play snatches from operas or comic songs, which were plainly audible through the thin partition wall.

They were kind, hospitable, and rather rackety folk, but they did not stay there very long.

When they left the house was taken by a couple of elderly sisters—very blue-blooded maiden ladies, who knew my father's occupation and bitterly resented our

neighbourhood. They expressed it by sending my poor mother acidly polite little complaints. One was, I remember, of the noise made by our servants' crinolines as they went up and down our stairs. The walls were thin, as I have said, but our maids did not wear crinolines. However, it amused my mother.

We went once to a children's party at the opposite house, which belonged to a solicitor, and I entertained a hopeless passion for his daughter, though she was only my senior by a year or two. She was black-haired and sallow, and not, if my memory is correct, particularly pretty. But she had the charm, to me, of being, or looking, extremely haughty and disdainful. She had no use for me.

I remember another party at which one of the boys and I found we had at least one thing in common and fraternized on the strength of it—both of us were to have a grey powder when we got back.

Children, I believe, are not given grey powders nowadays, and their state is the more blessed. The powder in the spoon had a layer of brown sugar which only rendered it more loathsome, though, to do it justice, it was palatable in comparison with castor oil. With a stern nurse like ours these minor troubles could cast very long shadows before them.

On Sundays we always walked from Phillimore Gardens to St. Paul's, Onslow Square, and back every morning, and, as a counterweight, to Allen Street Congregational Chapel in the evening.

Most of the way to Onslow Square was pleasant enough—at least for a year or two and in summer—for it lay between privet hedges and orchards. Gradually the hedges grew thinner and thinner, the apple- and pear-trees vanished, heaps of decaying oyster shells—how and why deposited there, I know not—appeared at corners of the lanes and smelt unpleasantly. Until, about 1866, the

Underground Railway absorbed most of the ground, and builders the rest.

I can see my brothers and myself walking through those lanes; we must have looked quaint little objects in helmet-shaped Leghorn hats with black ribbons, grey jackets and knickerbockers, white waistcoats, and scarlet stockings, as we walked on ahead, our father and mother following.

The interior of St. Paul's at that time was depressing. A plain wooden gallery ran all round. The Communion Table (it would have been 'Popish' to speak of it as an 'Altar') was at the West End, and above it was what I really think must have been the very worst stained-glass window that even the forties can have produced. It had no scenes nor figures, but merely geometrical patterns—interlaced circles and hexagons and so forth, carried out in the crudest possible colours. Evidently it proved too unbearable at last, for it has long been replaced. I know it had a very lowering effect on my spirits.

There were other terrors. At the base of the Communion rails were long red-cushioned seats, and on these seats sat a row of prim Charity-School girls. There were times when, our pew being full for some reason, I had to sit outside on a little camp-stool under the stolid gaze of those girls, and, being a shy boy, suffered untold agonies. I suppose some boys in my position would have winked at them, but it never occurred to me to do so—which was perhaps as well.

The service was severely Evangelical; the psalms were read, not sung, the tunes of the 'Magnificat', &c., and hymns must have been selected for their dolefulness; the Minister (he was never called by any other title) preached in a Geneva gown, and for never less than fifty minutes. There was a large and pious-looking clock at the farther end of the gallery, and it seemed to me that its hands took an eternity to cover five minutes.

As if by some intuition, my father always shut the big

Bible on the ledge in front of him about ten minutes before the final exhortation, so I could tell when we were in sight of port—but those were weary hours. In later years I devised methods of passing the time.

When I escaped the ordeal of the camp-stool I was not much better off, for I was given hospitality by a solemn lady with long side ringlets like a spaniel's ears, whom I identified in my mind as 'Mrs. Fairchild' of *The Fairchild Family*, and who put the fear of God into me far more than the preacher did. She took down the sermon—whether in shorthand or not, I don't know, and I wondered how she could possibly do it. I wonder still.

I cannot say that I found the Congregational services more inspiring. There were long prayers there, which, with the sermon itself, made three sermons of average duration. Some diversion was afforded by the choir of serious young men and maidens, who rose at intervals in a balcony behind the pulpit and sang anthems quite melodiously.

Still, I was glad when we came away.

Our Sunday literature was restricted. There was a time when my mother read aloud to us from *The Fairchild Family*. But a spirit of irreverence came over us, and she and we laughed so much that I think the readings were given up. We had *The Sunday at Home* and *Good Words for the Young*, both of them fairly to our tastes; also a book called *Ministering Children*, which always affected me with the profoundest melancholy. As, from my recollection of it, the chief person in it was a sweet and lovely girl who was slowly dying from consumption throughout the book, and made a beautiful but prolonged passing at the end of it, its effect on me is not altogether surprising.

Such were our Sundays, and such, I daresay, were the Sundays of most of our contemporaries. Thanks to our mother, they were not days of gloom, but we preferred any other day of the week to them.

When we were not having lessons with our mother, who, if her rule was light, taught us, as I have said, very thoroughly, or walking with her or our nurse, we amused ourselves in various ways. One of them was to construct a pulpit and pews out of chairs and preach to one another. Why, after our Onslow Square experiences, we should have considered this entertaining, or what we found to preach about, I have no idea. The same obliging chairs became ships or trains or desert islands when we were weary of theology.

I read anything I could get hold of, eighteenth-century volumes of the *Spectator* among them, and I recollect being frightened by Sir Roger's account of one of his servants who said he had seen 'a black horse without a head' in the park.

We had a number of volumes of the *Penny Magazine* published in the thirties, with a series of illustrated articles on Hogarth; one picture was his burlesque of perspective, and, after studying it carefully, I was puzzled to think how one man at the door-way or window of his house could possibly light his clay pipe from that of another man on the top of a distant hill. But there he was, actually doing it, so I concluded that it must be all right.

Chambers's *Book of Days*, in two big volumes, was a great treat, though it could not be enjoyed with unwashed hands. I imbibed a good deal of miscellaneous information from those two volumes, which are now on my bookshelf.

I read *Wives and Daughters* as it came out in the *Cornhill Magazine*, which we took in, and liked it extremely, without any clear understanding of the story.

We also took in *Punch*, until a cartoon appeared in which some Commander-in-Chief was represented as being snubbed by the War Office. He happened to be one of my father's heroes, and curiously, for my father was not at all a dull man, he quite mistook the point and thought

that *Punch* was on the side of the War Office, after which he gave up that paper and took in *Fun* instead.

*Fun* in those days was nearer being a formidable rival to *Punch* than any other humorous paper has ever been to this day. It had a few good black-and-white draughtsmen, Paul Gray, Fred Barnard, and, later, J. F. Sullivan, among them, but its strong point was its letterpress. W. S. Gilbert, T. W. Robertson, H. J. Byron, and 'Arthur Sketchley' were the chief contributors, and I recollect the uproarious delight with which, curled up in a big arm-chair, I first made 'Mrs. Brown's' acquaintance in its pages. Two years later the 'Bab Ballads' appeared there, to our intense joy.

Lear's *Book of Nonsense* I had known, I think, since I was seven, and I studied it with profound interest but—which seems to show that my sense of humour was very much in embryo—without the least amusement, for I took it all seriously, being much concerned about the 'Old man from the Cape' whose Barbary Ape 'one very dark night set the house all alight', and the young lady from Sweden who somehow got into a slow train to Weedon. I thought them most unfortunate, but wished their pictures had been more convincing; the wheels of the train to Weedon, for instance, struck me as unserviceable.

And we had *Tinykin's Transformations*, by Mark Lemon, which we liked, the *Swiss Family Robinson*, which we laughed at, *Sandford and Merton*—good in parts, whenever Mr. Barlow was out of the way, *The Hatchet Throwers*, by the Brothers Greenwood, illustrated by Ernest Griset, and Charles H. Bennett's priceless *Noodle Doo*—long most undeservedly and ungratefully forgotten, for both coloured plates and letterpress should, one would have thought, have rendered their author immortal. For a selection of modernized *Aesop's Fables*, also by Bennett, I cared much less; the drawings were exceedingly clever, but, to my taste, somewhat repellent,

and the ingeniously satirical applications only mystified and disquieted me.

But Bennett, during his short life, was as individual and humorous a draughtsman as any in the last century, and it seems strange that so much invention and originality should have left no lasting impression.

In 1865, and for some summers following, my father took a house, then called Colwell Cottage, which still stands, though enlarged and with a different name, between Totland and Colwell Bays in the Isle of Wight, and it was there that I first began really to love the country.

There was sea-bathing, of course, though, as we had a Spartan nurse with a theory that to make children accustomed to the sea there is nothing like ducking them in it without warning, I rather disliked that part of the morning.

But there were walks over the warren, with a champagne scent in its turf and innumerable rabbit-scuts twinkling down holes, or through lanes with high hedges festooned with honeysuckle and deadly nightshade, and woods where there were nuts to gather, and the oak-trees provided us with hard round galls, each with a tiny hole in it, which galls we treasured for no particular reason unless that they had a queer bitter smell which we found attractive.

A favourite expedition was over hills and through coppices to a farm, where we drank warm milk from the cows, and then went on to Yarmouth, from which we had an exciting drive back on the top of the 'Rocket' coach. The coach had only a pair of horses to draw it, but it was an undeniable mail-coach, or had been in its time.

We had a small 'basket' carriage of our own there, in which my father used to drive a very gentle grey mare called Fanny, whom we loved passionately; we children used to spend hours in the stable sitting on her broad back,

which she could hardly have enjoyed, but bore without resentment.

When we had to part from her at the end of our stay, the old gardener would plait hairs from her tail and give them to us as souvenirs, which we preserved as almost heart-breaking relics for weeks.

I remember an occasion when we drove over to Newport and were eagerly awaiting dinner in an upper room at the Bugle Hotel. Chickens, with bread sauce and the usual vegetables, had been ordered from the head-waiter, who was short and extremely stout, but they took some time to prepare, and we had been chanting 'Little fat waiter, don't be long—don't be long!' for several minutes, when the panelled double doors at the end of the room were opened with a flourish and the little fat waiter entered with our dinner on a tray.

And at that moment he caught his foot in something, and chickens, vegetable dishes, bread sauce, and plum tart all shot on the floor in one glorious cascade, which caused us all such intense delight that we forgot the disappointment.

We used to drive to Brook, too, and bring home brilliantly hued sea-anemones and small fish for a bell-glass aquarium in the hall. The fish promptly disappeared in the tentacles of the anemones, but we caught a large hermit crab once who resisted their advances for many days, and awoke us at night by the clank of his shell against the glass as he made his laborious rounds. However, the anemones got him out of his shell at last, and we heard him no more.

Colwell Cottage had a clematis-covered porch, and I never smell clematis to this day without being carried back to my youth. There was a lawn, on which my father played with us at trap-bat and ball and cricket, and, later on, croquet, at which latter game I regret to say we cheated whenever we got a chance. At least we did until



an old family friend caught us at it, and told us that boys who cheated at croquet would grow up dishonest. After which we played the game.

In 1928, when I was staying for a few days at the very comfortable Totland Bay Hotel, finding Colwell Cottage apparently unoccupied and the gate open, I went in and stood on the same lawn where we had played over sixty years ago. The trees and shrubs which surrounded it were, of course, much higher and thicker, but otherwise it was little changed. Even the double carriage-gates and posts were, I believe, the very same through which we children had driven behind the beloved grey mare, Fanny. And the Tudor-style house farther on in which, as an infant, I had been promised those marble cannons, was still there, and the fanlight of the door still had a card with 'Apartments' on it.

In these days, when most of the landmarks of our youth have disappeared or are on the point of disappearing, there is a pleasant pathos in coming across any that still survive.

Kensington High Street was very different from the crowded bustling place it is now. On the south side were big white important-looking houses (John Leech occupied one) with posts and rails in front of their cobbled forecourts. On the north, about where the Town Hall stands now, was a Georgian brick Charity School, with two painted figures of a Bluecoat boy and girl in niches. Those figures are now on a building at the south-west corner of St. Mary Abbot's Church but look dingier than they did in 1864.

Next to the Charity School was a blacksmith's forge, and the tink-tink of his hammer could be heard for yards away. Next to that a small toyshop, kept by an austere widow, from whom in later years we bought sheets of coloured scenes and characters for our toy theatre.

I can just remember the old Parish Church, with its

galleries and high pews, and I have a vision of a big west window with three large figures, possibly a Transfiguration, in strong colours on a plain leaded ground. But I am prepared to find that this is an illusion of mine.

The houses opposite, where Barker's now stands, were old but rather sordid. I can remember small bakers' shops with big placards showing the prices of bread, and I think there were low ginshops or public-houses as well.

But towards Kensington Gardens the houses had red-tiled roofs and bow-fronted shop windows, with a pleasant air of belonging to a country market town. Only two of those houses remain, and both have plate-glass shop fronts now.

There was a gloomy brown brick house on the south side near the entrance to Palace Green and taking up a good deal of the pavement. Its windows were heavily barred, and I believed it to be a mad-house, but I don't know on what authority.

Somewhere farther east, how far I forget, but I think where Iverna Gardens are now, there was a horrible slum. I used to see unwholesome ruffians lounging against posts and smoking short clays, and got past them as soon as possible. This slum was cleared away in the seventies by Albert Grant, the speculative financier, who built a huge and pretentious mansion on the site, but came to grief before he could occupy it. And, as nobody else would, and it was only used occasionally for the Bachelor's Ball and similar festivities, it did not long survive the slums.

I read a *pasquinade* pasted on its gates just before its destruction, which ran:

*Scarce built, pulled down! Yet, bonest Grant, don't groan,  
It's cost you not a penny—of your own!*

Early in the sixties I remember seeing notices in some of the High Street windows announcing that Mr. Charles Dickens would read on certain dates at St. James's Hall,

which made me wonder who Mr. Dickens might be, and why there should be anything remarkable in the fact that he should read—which I could do myself for that matter.

But by 1865 I had made the acquaintance of *Oliver Twist* and *David Copperfield* at least.

Some time in 1864 I was out with my nurse and brothers and had just reached the place near Wright's Lane where John Leech's house stood when we noticed that people were lining the pavement and cheering as an open carriage and pair drove by. In the carriage sat a man in a round black cloth hat like a turban and a red shirt. He had a kindly face with a short grey beard and struck me as being rather like a family friend of ours. Fanny told us it was 'Garibaldi', but I forget whether the name conveyed anything to me or not at the time. He must have been driving to a garden-party at Chiswick House or Holland House, and wherever he went was recognized with enthusiasm.

He was immensely popular during his visit, and a striped blouse which women wore shortly afterwards was known as a 'garibaldi'. It was not a beautiful garment.

My father had an elder and only brother, Robert, who was married and lived with my aunt at Scarsdale Villas. Our Uncle Robert half frightened and half fascinated us; he had, I believe, lost a good deal of his money in betting, and led my poor aunt a rather hectic life by his behaviour generally. We did not of course know that, but we had an impression that he was by no means an exemplary uncle. When we went to tea there he invariably promised us that the very next time we came he would make soup for us in a certain lacquer gipsy cauldron on three poles which was one of the ornaments on the mantelpiece.

We believed him, and though we had our doubts whether the soup would be nice, and realized that even

if it was, there could not be very much of it, we were disappointed when we found at each visit that the soup-making was unavoidably postponed to the next.

One afternoon our wicked uncle, with the amiable intention, I believe, of annoying my aunt, provided all his small guests with a box of matches apiece, and sent us into the garden with instructions to burn down a decrepit trellis-work arbour that stood in a corner of it. We considered this a highly sensible idea—for a grown-up—and did our best to carry it out. However, as he probably knew, the wood was too hard or too damp to prove inflammable, and all we burnt were the matches. We gathered that our aunt did not share his sympathy with our efforts.

Uncle Robert died a year or two after that, and when, during his last illness, I went with my father to see him, I was left to wait in a room downstairs where I found a little early nineteenth-century volume of *Aesop's Fables*, copiously illustrated by woodcuts. These fables I read with intense interest, and no doubt whatever that each fable recorded an actual incident. Uncle Robert heard of this, and insisted on his death-bed that I should have the book, which became one of my most valued possessions. I have it still, with an inscription in pencil on the fly-pages 'From dere Uncle Robbert'. But I am afraid that I was not particularly fond of him, though I remember feeling slightly depressed when Fanny told me that he was dead.

My mother had four brothers, Adolphus, Edward, Michael, and Algernon, and one sister, Emily.

Uncle 'Dolph', as we called him, I remember as a handsome fair-haired man with the Dundreary whiskers of the period; he lived in Paris, where he had a business of some kind—I never knew what, but I believe it brought him a good income. While I was at Cambridge he wrote,

after a considerable interval, to my mother, offering me a position in his office, an offer which to my exceeding relief was politely declined.

For I had not seen him since I was a child and had not liked him then, for he had a superior air and a sarcastic tongue which did not encourage affection. On his rare visits to London he stayed with us at Phillimore Gardens, and on one occasion annoyed my father considerably by remaining in bed so long after he had been informed by the maid that she had turned on the water for his bath that the bath-room was flooded and a cascade of hot water poured down the stairs. My uncle in his most superior manner contended that it was the maid's duty to let him know when the bath was ready, while my father's view was that common sense should have told my uncle that when the taps were once running the bath would not take long in filling.

The incident did not improve their never over-cordial relations and is perhaps only worth mentioning here as a proof that London houses built in the early sixties did contain bath-rooms, which I saw authoritatively denied a little time ago.

My mother was Uncle Dolph's favourite sister, and he occasionally sent her little articles de Paris, *pâte de guimauve*, chocolate, and novels by the Empress's favourite author, Octave Feuillet, two of which, *Le Roman d'un jeune homme pauvre* and *M. de Camors*, she handed over to me while I was at Cambridge. The former would I imagine strike a modern reader as distinctly mild and sugary, but the latter had some strong and dramatic situations and some charming descriptive passages.

For years there were no communications between Uncle Dolph and ourselves: then came his unexpected offer, and after that I heard no more of him.

Uncle Ted was a dark and inferior copy of his elder brother; he made no impression on us children and we

saw very little of him. I gathered that he was extravagant and rather weak, and I heard after I had left Cambridge that he was a clerk in the offices of a well-known patent pill business then established in Oxford Street.

I only saw my uncle Mike once and that must have been some time in 1862; he was a midshipman in the Merchant Service and was on leave when he stayed with us in St. George's Terrace. He was lively and pleasant and I remember him jumping over a fence to get me something that had caught my eye; it turned out to be a dilapidated box of sodden paints, but I was very grateful to him. After that visit we never saw him again, for he was drowned on his next voyage.

My Aunt Emily resembled Uncle Dolph both in colouring and a certain sharpness of tongue; she gave us handsome Christmas presents which I am afraid she could ill afford, but we were rather afraid than fond of her.

She was married before 1864, and there must have been some kind of quarrel which was certainly not of my mother's seeking, but long before her death they ceased to correspond and I never knew what became of Aunt Emily.

She and at least two of my uncles were, like my mother, extremely well educated, but Algernon, the youngest of the family, had had the ill luck to be born when my grandfather was no longer well to do. So Uncle Algy being turned out at an early age to make a living for himself—I think in a drapery shop—had no education worth calling one and the accent of the typical Cockney clerk. But he was the only one of our uncles that we were fond of, for though he was voluble and cocksure and excitable he was very warm-hearted, devoted, with good reason, to my mother and, with little or none, to us, in whose capacities he had a pathetically naïve belief.

Eventually he married an excellent and devoted woman who assisted him in the business he had started on his

own account and carried on with fair success till his death in the early nineties.

My grandmother I only faintly remember as a pretty old lady who always talked French with my mother when she took us to see her and who had a tendency to give us presents we had no use for.

My first recollection of my grandfather is of a portly rather alarming old gentleman, clean-shaven and with greyish hair brushed in pigeon's wings above his ears. He was by way of being a humorist, and once when I fired a wooden pop-gun I had at him I was acutely distressed to see him fall in apparent agony, a result I had certainly not expected. And at several subsequent visits of his my remorse was revived by finding that his leg was still swathed in a bandanna handkerchief. Altogether he enjoyed his little joke more than I did, for I never saw it.

He took a great interest in my education and was particularly anxious that I should learn to spell correctly; to assist in this he gave me a small volume of Lord Chesterfield's letters all elaborately mis-spelt which I was to put right. I am not sure that this method was not quite as likely to stereotype the mis-spelling on the memory, but it was not so in my case, perhaps because it appealed to the somewhat priggish pleasure in detecting errors. Still, if my orthography became correct at a comparatively youthful age, this was due far more to my mother than to my grandfather or Lord Chesterfield.

About 1864 I was told that my grandfather—a widower by that time—had had a 'stroke', which did not convey much to my mind. So that when I first drove down with my mother to the Home for Incurables at Putney, where my father had procured his admittance, it was a considerable shock to me to find, instead of the hearty grandfather with the authoritative voice and—to me—incomprehensible jokes, a feeble old gentleman with a long beard, in a smoking-cap, and a Bath chair, who cried

whenever he spoke to me. This, however, I found was due to weakness and not depression, for he was really in excellent spirits, thoroughly enjoyed his life in the comfortable quarters and beautiful grounds of the Home, and was the recognized wit and raconteur of the inmates.

Still, he did not give me that impression at the time, and I was always glad to be driving back across the old wooden bridge with its red-roofed gatehouse which still had many years to stand.

My father had several sisters, only one of whom lived in London; she lost her husband, a stockbroker, in 1862, and she and our cousins, who were only a little older than we were, lived in Hamilton Terrace.

She was well to do, had a carriage and pair, and kept a liberal table, a little too liberal for our comfort, for none of us being large eaters, we could never do full justice to the numerous dishes, which my aunt—in the manner of those days—took as a reflection on her provender.

We enjoyed staying with our Hamilton Terrace cousins, who were lively and high-spirited, but their sense of humour occasionally made meals a little embarrassing for us. For my aunt, who had a faint suggestion to our minds of Queen Victoria and cultivated a severe manner, would at times when the conversation was getting out of hand call us to order by a reproving glare round the table. Whereupon my cousins invariably affected abject terror and whispered melodramatically to one another and us 'The Face! The Face!' which of course reduced us to helpless giggles that fortunately escaped my aunt's eye.

We were always slightly in awe of her, but she was kind enough and far better read and more interested in current literature than most middle-class matrons were in those days. She died suddenly a year or two after I left Cambridge, and all but one of my cousins are now dead.



The eldest, Frank, was a tea-planter in India for several years and as a boy remarkably good-looking: his next brother, Percy, was a brilliant musician and had a vein of genuine humour, though he made no public use of either of these gifts.

My mother had a distant cousin of the same surname as her own whom we knew as 'Cousin George' and rather liked without in the least respecting. For even our immature minds had early perceived that Cousin George, grown up though he might be, could not be taken at all seriously. By profession he was a solicitor and must have had a fairly good practice, though why or how—as, to us at all events, he never betrayed the least sign of any knowledge whatever—was a mystery. I should not have cared to be a client of his.

He was fairly tall, distinctly plain, with a good deal of iron-grey hair and whisker, but he had a very favourable opinion of his own looks and was always very well turned out. There was a year when he stayed with us at Colwell Cottage in the Isle of Wight and delighted us immensely by proceeding to Totland Bay in a top-hat, white buckskin gloves and otherwise richly arrayed, blissfully unconscious that he would find neither pier nor parade nor so much as a bathing-machine on that bare and unfashionable shore.

In town he rode daily in the Row and his chief topic in conversation with my mother was the extraordinary excellence of his mare; another topic was what qualities he would consider indispensable in any one he might choose as a wife. He did not marry till much later in life and then he chose a plump white lethargic lady who did not appear to have any distinctive qualities whatever. However, I believe she made him very happy and contented, which after all is the main thing.

Cousin George, though he was absolutely without a

sense of humour, was not deterred by that from making jokes, and these efforts never failed to reduce any gathering to almost hysteric mirth.

The reason was that he invariably began by laughing at his jokes himself and his laughter was unlike that of any other human being; it began with an excellent imitation of a saw going through hard timber, then rose into an even better rendering of a remarkably hoarse cock at sunrise, and sank into a succession of brays which only died away from sheer exhaustion, leaving his convulsed hearers in much the same condition.

Each of these experiences of course confirmed Cousin George's opinion of his own wit—not unnaturally, for Yorick himself could never have set tables on a louder roar. I am told that I first heard that laugh at the tender age of two and after a moment or so of blank amazement nearly laughed myself out of my high chair. I like to think that I showed so precocious a sense of the ludicrous, especially as it became dormant for many years to come.

The father of our beloved Aunt Sarah, Uncle Robert's wife, was a rich retired tradesman and a prominent Non-conformist of some denomination. He lived in an old Georgian house, now replaced by a block of flats, in North End Lane as it was then called, and a particularly plain little chapel which he built and endowed and I think occasionally preached in is still standing nearly opposite where his carriage gates used to be.

I remember him as a very old high-coloured man rather like an aged mastiff with most of its teeth gone. He always wore a white neckcloth and rusty black, and when we went to children's parties at his house preached little sermons to us while we sat at supper, but the supper being excellent, we did not mind him much.

He had married five times and I think survived his fifth

wife; he had a habit of attending auctions and on one occasion bought an obelisk of wood or stone on a pedestal which he put up in his grounds and inscribed with the names of four of his deceased wives. At another auction he bid for a hearse, got it for a song, and sending for one of his carriage horses drove his purchase triumphantly to his stables. What he expected to do or did with this acquisition I never heard; probably it was its cheapness that attracted him.

But he must have had some taste and judgement, for his entrance hall was panelled with exquisite Chinese paintings on mirrors, golden pheasants, peonies, and so forth which would be priceless to-day. Another of his purchases was a sixteenth-century enamel plaque in grisaille and flesh tints, dated and signed with initials. The subject was scriptural, which was no doubt why it appealed to him.

The house of brownish brick with French windows at the back leading to a verandah stood on a slight eminence, and on the lawn were some blue-and-white Nankin porcelain tub seats. Lower down was a pond of goldfish, and a dog of ours disgraced us once by jumping in and bringing one of these to land. In a further part of the grounds was a most fascinating miniature mountain up which one climbed by a winding path to enjoy the view, and in another part was an octagonal summer-house with coloured glass in its windows.

A year or two ago when North End House was about to be demolished I saw that summer-house once more after a period of at least sixty years and the coloured glass was still there. But the mountain and the fish-pond had both vanished, as most of the grounds had long been built on; and now nothing remains of what was a typical country-house for the retired merchant of the middle eighteenth century. For years before its demolition it was, unless I am mistaken, a mental home.

A son of this old gentleman by one of his numerous marriages was always known to us as 'Cousin James'; my father and he were close friends and frequent companions on driving tours through the Midlands. Cousin James was a knowledgeable man with horses, and my brother and I were always delighted on mornings when his smart phaeton and pair called for us at Phillimore Gardens and he drove us in state through the Park to Piccadilly, where we were dropped while he went on to his offices in the City, where he had a large practice as a solicitor. He was a hearty, genial, loud-voiced man and, though we sometimes thought his raillery ill-timed, we were well inclined to him otherwise, while we were on excellent terms with his sons.

As a younger man my father had been a great playgoer, but had given it up after his marriage. My mother enjoyed any kind of theatrical show, but as he preferred his fireside of an evening, they never went until I was over fourteen, after which they did so occasionally whenever we had visitors staying with us.

But we were taken to the Old Gallery of Illustrations, which was not considered a theatre, and very delightful it was. The auditorium was narrow and rather stuffy, the seats sloped in a steep rake down to the tiny stage. Gilbert, Burnand, and the à Becketts wrote the plays, which were not called plays but 'illustrations', so that the strictest could see them without offence. The scenery was painted by Telbin and other leading scenic artists, the music was by Sullivan, Clay, and other composers whose names I forget. I saw John Parry there as a Doge in Robertson's *A Dream at Venice*, and afterwards at the piano with, I think, *The Wedding Breakfast*, and I made a nuisance of myself at home afterwards by constant repetitions of the catchwords of the comic characters.

These little plays were excellent entertainments, and

when, as a boy, I was first taken to a regular theatre, I found the play (it was *Milky White*, by H. T. Craven) much below my expectations.

The Christy Minstrels at St. James's Hall were another joy; you sat on seats with broad white and crimson stripes; the minstrels occupied a long semicircle of chairs on the stage; they were all deeply serious persons—especially a tall man in the middle who seemed to be the High Priest—except the two at each end, who were frivolous. One was 'Pony' Moore, who had an engaging black tuft on the top of his head and a very large brilliant ring on one of his fingers. When a pathetic song was being sung the corner men blinked the whites of their eyes as an indication that their hearts were in the right place. I made up my mind that, when I grew up, I too would be a corner man.

We went to circuses, too, magnificent shows at the Agricultural Hall: the first I saw, in 1864, ended with a real tournament, with knights in armour, and a clown on a hobby-horse riding at the quintain. Much later, in 1871, was the Fall of Strasbourg, which was provisioned before the siege began by driving in a dozen sheep and two cows. This I thought at the time somewhat inadequate.

There was Hengler's Circus, too, in Argyll Street, but I think we did not go there till after I was at school.

We were taken of course to Mme Tussaud's, then in Baker Street, and to the Polytechnic. I still recall one charming effect in *Cinderella* on the magic-lantern screen, when we were shown her golden coach and six white horses starting, and winding their way up through a forest to the castle, getting smaller and smaller at each turn.

There was a great diving-bell, in which you could be lowered into a tank of dull green water for sixpence. We never were, but I don't think I considered this any deprivation. There was a theatre, too, where you could

enjoy very dull lectures on chemistry, and a larger one where the magic-lantern show was given, with Pepper's Ghost, which I found quite thrilling, to follow, and, in later years, plays in costume acted in dumb show by the performers, the lines being read by some one at the wing. I remember an historical burlesque in which Drake arrived at Plymouth on a penny steamer and Burleigh remarked of Queen Elizabeth:

*She'll be in a pet—  
Drake's in a boat that's not invented yet!*

which conceit I still think far from bad.

In the Central Hall was the glass-blower's stall, where you could buy engaging little glass spaniels with brown or black markings, and full-rigged ships with blue sailors on the ratlines, at prices a tenth of what they would cost as 'antiques' nowadays.

But somehow there was a faint trail of the Educational Serpent over the Polytechnic which chastened its attractions for me. As, I suppose, is the case with most small boys where toys are concerned, I was at most times quite untroubled by their failure to resemble whatever they were intended for, and at others seriously perturbed by some detail which I considered untrue to life.

On my seventh birthday I was given a little train, the engine of which was unlike any locomotive I had ever seen, and the carriages it drew had the disadvantage of being unprovided with floors. Possibly because they were all neatly made and painted in charming colours I overlooked all drawbacks and was quite as well satisfied as if that train had been one of the accurate little models that are sold to-day.

Not many months later, just before I went to bed, I was presented with a little hansom cab with doors that would open; it had a little plaster passenger and driver, both of whom sat on sharp spikes, an arrangement which I

accepted without question. What *did* trouble me to a degree that spoilt my pleasure in the cab was that its driver's top-hat appeared to be a bright green, and I had never beheld any cab-driver in a top-hat of that colour.

So it was a great relief to discover the next morning that I had been misled by the nursery gaslight, and that the driver's hat was actually a light grey, which was a quite allowable headgear for any hansom cabman.

But probably the modern boy demands absolute accuracy in every detail and would scorn any toy vehicle in which passengers were expected to sit on spikes. I was less exacting myself on their behalf.

The first two years in Phillimore Gardens were almost uninterruptedly happy. Up to the time we went there I do not think that I found life particularly enjoyable, though I had every reason to do so. I can remember moods of quite causeless depression and discontent with things in general which took possession of me at times, when it seemed to me that this world I found myself in was a rather wearisome affair. This of course was unnatural and morbid for my years, and was possibly due to my being thrown a great deal on my own resources for amusement until my brothers were old enough to be my playfellows.

I was extremely sentimental, too, in those days, though I do not think that any one—even my mother—ever discovered this, for I was not demonstrative.

In our nursery at St. George's Terrace there was a wood-engraving of Landseer's 'The Shepherd's Chief Mourner'—a collie with his head laid on his dead master's coffin—which affected me with a secret and delicious melancholy. So did a mournful ballad, sung I think by the Christy Minstrels, about a child called 'Little Prairie Flower' who died. I liked to picture myself as her devoted

friend, and as dying of grief shortly after her, amidst general sympathy and admiration.

But from 1864 these unhealthy symptoms disappeared, and I enjoyed life thoroughly—at least until the time drew near when I knew I should have to leave home for school.



## ‘Crichton House’

My ideas of school life were almost entirely derived from *Nicholas Nickleby* and *David Copperfield*, so I had no ground for thinking that it was likely to prove a pleasant experience. Every now and then I felt a cold dread at the sudden recollection that in a few months, then a few weeks, then a few days only, my comfortable sheltered life would be over, and I should be in surroundings of which all that I knew was that I could not expect them to be agreeable. But my spirits were buoyant, and I soon forgot these gloomy anticipations. I should have to go to school, I knew, but at least I wasn’t there yet. It was some time before it was decided to which school I should be sent, but it was finally settled that I should go to Crichton House (I use the name I gave it in *Vice Versâ*).

My aunt in Hamilton Terrace had some friends and neighbours of the name of Wyon; he was the Queen’s medallist, and my father and mother had met Mr. and Mrs. Wyon several times at my aunt’s. Their two boys were at Crichton House, and they spoke so highly of the school and ‘Dr. Grimstone’ that my parents both concluded that they could not do better than place me under his care.

And at last the long-dreaded day actually came, and though I remember feeling distinctly miserable before I fell asleep the night before, I said good-bye to my mother without displaying, or—if I recollect rightly, as I believe I do—even feeling any acute sorrow. After all, there was something grand and exciting in going to school, and having a brand-new playbox of my very own. Whether that was in my mind then, or whether I was too stunned

to have anything in my mind at all, I don't know, but I do know that, for some reason or other, I felt no inclination to break down at parting.

My father took me down to 'Market Rodwell' by train, and I remember that there was only one other passenger in our compartment, and that was a boy who seemed about two years older than myself, and who cracked and ate walnuts throughout the journey. I wondered whether by any chance he was going to Crichton House, but concluded that he was not bound for that or any other school, or he would be in no mood for walnuts.

When I arrived I was reassured by finding that at least Crichton House did not seem to have anything in common with either Mr. Creakle's establishment or Dotheboys Hall. Mr. Grimstone (as I shall continue to call him—he was neither a doctor nor in orders) was rather formidable in appearance, tall and broad, with a clean-shaven upper lip and a beard sprinkled with grey, but his manner was genial, and I did not feel at all afraid of him. Mrs. Grimstone looked kind and motherly, as indeed she was, there was a pleasant and friendly eldest daughter of about eight (who, I may say, was *not* the original of Dulcie) and some younger children.

I was sent into the playground with 'Cissie', the eldest girl, and when my father left I was in one of the swings on the trapeze, and quite reconciled to my new surroundings. I discovered that the quarter—as terms were called at Crichton House—had not yet begun, and only two or three boys were there, with whom I found it easy enough to fraternize. I shared a comfortable bedroom with a boy much younger than myself—a peculiarly ugly boy with a large head, who was all but an idiot, but quite harmless, so I did not mind him.

It is odd, but during the years I spent at Crichton House I remember at least six boys who, though not actually imbecile, were much below the normal standard

of intelligence. It is something to the credit of the school that they were never ridiculed or teased on this account.

I think we were given light work to do during the days before the school reassembled, but mostly we were allowed to amuse ourselves as we chose, and I chose to draw and paint. We went for walks, and once the Grimstones took me for a drive through Richmond Park. Altogether it was not unlike being on a visit, and no one could have been let down more gently into boarding-school life.

And even when all the boys came back, although three or four seemed to me quite grown up, they were not at all terrifying. The two biggest were Gonzalez, who I think was a Creole, and Jules, a Frenchman; both of them I should say were at least eighteen. Gonzalez spoke English without much, if any, accent, but Jules's was distinctly French. They, and the other older boys in the first classes, kept apart from us juniors. There was no recognized head of the school, but on the other hand there was no bullying.

The two resident masters had been educated in one of the chief Nonconformist schools; they were both young, neither of them I should say much over twenty, but they were thoroughly good fellows, taught well and kept their classes in order. I liked them both extremely. The original of 'Mr. Tinkler' came much later.

We were taught French by a non-resident master, a M. Bouton, a short sallow man who always wore a tightly-buttoned frock-coat and was rather like Napoleon; he was not an inspiring teacher, but he allowed no liberties to be taken with him.

The German master—also only a bi-weekly visitor—was much less formidable and we could always draw him into irrelevant conversation by judicious questions, getting him to tell us the story of the joke he sent to 'Kladderadatch' on the subject of the Schleswig-Holstein

dispute—it was never too long a story for us—or how he had served his three years in a Lancer regiment, and his lance and shako and uniform were hanging up still—I think he said in his town hall, but it may have been in barracks—ready for him whenever there was a war. ‘And did you ever kill any one, Herr?’—we never addressed him as ‘Meinherr’, and he never corrected us—we would ask. ‘Nefer,’ he would assure us, ‘nod zo moch as von liddle mahouse!’ which we had no difficulty in believing.

He was very excitable, however, and on occasions when he joined us in the football field, wearing a little grey silk cap for the purpose, he would plunge into the fray, tossing small boys right and left in his mad bull career, and then when he saw the damage he had done, turning back remorsefully to kiss and console the wounded.

The war with Austria and, in 1870, the Franco-Prussian War came before I left Crichton House, but ‘Herr Stohwasser’s’ lance and shako remained hanging up wherever they were—at least they were not resumed by him. He may well have been above the age for being recalled; I don’t remember that we ever asked him if he was going to rejoin his regiment, probably we felt it might be a delicate question and liked him well enough to refrain.

We were drilled by a Sergeant Cunningham, a tall broad man with a wooden pock-marked but kindly face, who always wore a top-hat and a tightly-buttoned frock-coat. In 1870–1 he would abuse us for drilling ‘like them Mobyles’.

I think it was on my first Sunday at Crichton House that I discovered that Grimstone was more formidable than I had at first imagined.

We had marched to church and back in file, and on returning to our cold midday dinner had found the side desks and tables in the schoolroom laid out with green dessert plates, each containing eight or ten walnuts, afternoon dessert on Sundays, with occasionally a glass of

ginger or raisin wine apiece, being a custom of the school, and I think provided at Grimstone's expense.

One of the new boys evidently had not realized that he would share this feast, and, probably having a passion for walnuts and a habit of helping himself at home to anything he particularly fancied, filled the pockets of his knickerbockers with as many nuts as they would hold. He had been careful to do this when he was alone and unobserved, but not having the intelligence to conceal his crime, as he might possibly have done by abstracting one nut from each plate, had raided one only, which of course attracted attention.

And, as each of the marauder's thighs rose in an unnatural bulge, he was promptly detected. Then Grimstone, after a tremendous harangue in which the treble iniquity of dishonesty, greed, and ingratitude was forcibly depicted, suddenly produced a cane; the culprit was soundly swished before the whole school, and dismissed, yelping piteously, to his dormitory. I did not enjoy my portion of walnuts afterwards as much as I had anticipated.

But the punishment, which was certainly not undeserved, was quite effective—that boy never departed again from the strictest honesty. He wasn't at all a bad fellow, though never very bright, and developed later the habit of making movable pen-and-ink drawings which I attributed to Jolland in *Vice Versâ*, though Jolland, like most characters in fiction, was a composite of several originals.

One Saturday in the middle of my first quarter my father came down and told me he was taking me to Hampton Court, and I could ask any two of my school-fellows to come with us. I chose the two Wyons, though Arthur, Wyon major, was much older than I, and in one of the higher classes. However, he did not appear to consider this as 'cheek' on my part, and we had a very pleasant afternoon together, after a dinner at the Greyhound

Hotel, where our tremendous appetites astonished and delighted my father. We drove back through Kingston (where at a stationer's in the market-place I bought a note-book in which to enter any passages I came across in my reading that took my fancy, but never got beyond one solitary extract). On our way I heard that I was to come home for the Sunday, which put the crown on the day. I was of course delighted to see home again so unexpectedly, but I'm afraid I bragged a good deal to my mother about the scraps of learning I had acquired, and my content with school life, and I went back to it on the Monday without reluctance.

A day or two before the Christmas holidays I was much elated by being told by another new boy in the strictest confidence that I had won a prize, and that he had seen it with my name inscribed. But, as it turned out, I was not singular in this respect, for every boy had got one, not even he of the walnuts being omitted. This, however, did not appreciably lessen my satisfaction.

I don't think the glamour of school life lasted much longer than its novelty; as time went on I began to value the peace and comfort of home more and more, and went back to Crichton House in increasing depression.

Not that it was a bad school of its class; I might easily have been sent to one that was much worse. We were well looked after, and by no means badly taught. Grimstone had no degree, and I fancy had taught himself Latin and Greek, but what he did know he knew thoroughly, and could terrify us into learning. But the text-books were out of date, and it was only in my last year there that I made the acquaintance of the *Eton Latin Primer*, and in my last quarter that I was provided with a guide to the art of writing Latin verse, in which I doubt whether Grimstone himself was at all proficient.

We had several assistant masters after the two I mentioned left. Most of them were much less efficient, and

one or two feeble and incompetent creatures, but I remember at least one exception.

We were taught Latin chiefly by a non-resident master, a seedy little man with a very red nose, who was quite satisfied with an easy-going construe of Virgil and Caesar, which I found afterwards was much too casual for my first form-master at King's College School. Still I did acquire some knowledge of Latin, and even Greek as far as Xenophon.

Our elocution master was Pennington, a tall handsome fellow who had ridden in the Charge of the Light Brigade, and would occasionally recite Tennyson's poem on that subject to us with immense spirit. Once he came provided with a wig and gown and gave Serjeant Buzfuz's address to the Jury before the whole school. That was before I had got as far in *Pickwick* as the Trial, and I am ashamed to remember that, though I was impressed by his eloquence, I quite failed to see any humour in the performance. But, so far as I can recollect, we all took it very seriously.

As for the food, at breakfast and tea there was nothing but piles of bread and butter, but if the butter was rather thinly spread, it and the bread were excellent, and we had as much as we could eat.

Meat at breakfast was an extra, and was never anything but sardines or a thin slice of 'polony'; most boys had pots of anchovy or bloaters' paste, however, which they shared with less fortunate neighbours, and at tea any boy who had a cake or a pot of jam from home saw it handed round the tables, sometimes with only an off-chance of getting the final slice of cake or spoonful of jam.

The midday dinner was dreaded by myself and most of the boys who were in the least fastidious. The meat was probably good in quality, but, the cook being no artist, it often required an effort, even for healthy and hungry boys, to get it down, and there were one or two

soups and dishes which gave dismal notice of their imminence a good hour before we faced them. It never dawned on Grimstone that they were at all unappetizing, and to do him justice he ate precisely the same fare as we did, and with an enjoyment we were very far from sharing. Any attempt on our part to leave unattractive morsels uneaten was a most serious offence in his eyes.

On Sundays we were given cold beef and rhubarb or quince pies, and though we did not find these exactly exhilarating—indeed few dishes can be more depressing than a cold and untender rhubarb pie—they inspired us with no actual aversion.

And somehow, though the food generally was open to criticism, we managed to thrive on it. During the four years I was at Crichton House there was no epidemic of any kind, except a single case of scarlet fever, when we were all sent home immediately and escaped infection.

There was nothing rough in the general manners of the school; bullies, as I have said, were unknown, nor do I remember a single fight. None of the boys was in the habit of swearing, and it was not until my last year that I heard any conversation that could be called indecent, and that was only indulged in occasionally and by a few.

I made no secret of my father's calling, but though I was taunted about it now and then, I was never persecuted, nor, I think, actually looked down upon.

It is true that many of my schoolfellows were not in a position to be exclusive so far as rank was concerned, but we were a curiously mixed lot, and there were several boys there whose fathers were of higher degree, retired majors and captains, physicians, civil servants, gentlemen farmers, and so forth—one boy's father was a canon.

But, somehow or other, though I was plain and undersized and a hopeless rabbit at football and cricket, I was on good terms with most of them, and not unpopular.



In the dormitory I soon became established as a storyteller, beginning by repeating all I could remember of *Nicholas Nickleby* and Hans Andersen, and proceeding in time to endless improvisations of my own whose only merit was their soporific quality.

Still there were very few of my schoolfellows whom I really liked, and none with whom I formed any close friendship. There was a great deal of ill-natured gossip and secret backbiting among them, which I sometimes suffered from, though it did not make me particularly unhappy, at least for long.

What *did* depress me considerably was the constant apprehension of a 'row', for a 'row' at Crichton House was a most alarming event, and might happen at any moment.

At times the boy I called 'Chawner' in *Vice Versâ* would be impelled by conscience to reveal his own—and others'—misdoings—misdoings which would have been venial enough in any eyes but Grimstone's. But, perhaps from policy, he took a most serious view of them, called the school together, and not only thundered against the detected members, but invited those who were yet undiscovered to reveal their guilt—an invitation, however, of which we were careful not to avail ourselves.

The examples of his oratory in my first story are of course burlesqued to some extent, but he did fulminate very much on those lines.

If I had had enough sense of humour in those days I might have felt a secret joy in his deliverances, but that did not come till many years later. My nerves were far too shaken to permit me to see a comic side to these tremendous jeremiads at the time.

Sometimes the cause would be a crime that Grimstone had himself discovered—illicit purchases of sweets for instance, or writing or cutting names on the school furniture, and I would shiver at the guilty recollection of

having once accepted a contraband piece of butterscotch, or of a portion of a table that bore my initials.

Once the offence was the gift by one boy to another of any kind of article—the receiver being considered, if anything, the more reprehensible of the pair, and my Easter holidays were poisoned for me by the fact that a day-boarder had bestowed on me some little brass cannons on wooden gun-carriages of his own carving. When I came back I couldn't rest until I had returned these wedges of Achan, and the giver of them, very properly, thought me a fool for my scruples.

I always went back after the holidays with the gloomy reflection that there were bound to be at least two rows during the next quarter, and that I should be lucky indeed if I was not implicated in one of them.

As a matter of fact I was not often personally involved, but to assist as a mere spectator was terrible enough.

I was of a cheerful temperament generally, rather given to wool-gathering and occupied a great deal with quite foolish and trivial thoughts and plans of my own, so that I was seldom altogether miserable, but I was high-strung and never entirely shook off a feeling of some impending disaster which might fall when I least expected it. In fact it still haunts me at times.

It never did fall at all heavily, for Grimstone liked and was never hard on or prejudiced against me as he was with my brother Leonard.

So I ought to have liked him in return, but I never could; I was in too much terror of him, even at his mildest. When we did our Sunday lessons I could not resist an impious conviction that Grimstone, with his awful thunderings and his unpredictable changes from benevolence to wrath, had a great deal in common with Jehovah and probably resembled him in appearance. And I had never been able to conceive of the God of Israel as a lovable deity.

I have a recollection of sitting in class, letting my mind wander Heaven only knows where, as it was too apt to do, and then suddenly coming back to a startled realization of who I was and where I was. I had thought I was—I did not remember exactly what—but most certainly not a small boy on a hard form with a lesson before him that he did not know.

But I have no desire to present myself as a pathetic object for sympathy, I did not enjoy school life—not many boys do—but I was no victim, I had no particular hardships to endure, and, though I cannot say I was happy at Crichton House, I found existence there quite tolerable on the whole.

I was not, as I have said, good at games, and I doubt whether I should have found football or cricket much more attractive even if they had been better organized than they were. A few of the older fellows played with energy but not much skill, the rest of us occasionally backing them up more or less half-heartedly. Now and then at football, generally when Grimstone was present, I would rouse myself to charge some bigger boy who was dribbling the ball in my direction, with the usual result of finding myself on my back and the ball well on its original course. At cricket I was usually placed at some point which the ball was unlikely to reach, and as there were no overs, I could pursue my own thoughts undisturbed till the other side was out. When I was in to bat the field closed in all round in what I considered an uncomplimentary manner, and if I was not bowled out first, I obliged with an easy catch, and retired quite unabashed, and rather relieved to have got it over.

There was no spirit of emulation; nobody cared which side won, we never played other schools, and no one was a hero among us on account of his prowess at football or cricket. So that I did not suffer appreciably in reputation by my glaring incompetence in either.

Grimstone would appear and captain a side at football, exactly as I described him as doing in *Vice Versâ*, and he would bowl at cricket—unless I am mistaken—for both sides.

In the playground the only game allowed was 'Chevy', known elsewhere as 'Prisoners' Base'. It was not much of a game and demanded no more than speed and agility in evading pursuit, and as I had both these I played with some success, though seldom with any enjoyment.

And there was a summer time when we all took to duelling with basket-hilted sticks, and I found I could hold my own against most antagonists. We were not allowed to hit at one another's heads, but our legs showed some very creditable bruises.

At gymnastics I was a very mediocre performer on the parallel bars or trapeze, and though I amused myself by mounting the steps to the top of the trapeze, transferring to the pole and sliding down it, I could never climb far up either the pole or a rope.

Altogether I was anything but athletic, but though two or three of the fellows were quite good, and very few were worse than myself at games, I never found that I was looked down upon on that account.

What I really did enjoy was a wet half-holiday, when we stayed in and were free to spend the afternoon as we chose. I chose to draw pictures in coloured chalks of battles (inspired by the lids of my early boxes of soldiers), houses, or ships on fire, railway trains crossing viaducts, and similar subjects, which I gave away to any one who wanted them; it is odd that there should have been any demand for them, for they were atrociously bad, but the standard in art at Crichton House was not high. A couple of years ago, I heard from an old schoolfellow of those days whom I had not seen since, and when I went to see him I was touched to find that he still had one of my early performances, which he showed me; it was a pen-and-ink

record of adventures, and the wonder was that he should have thought it worth preserving, which it certainly was not. But there it was, the pages a little browned and worn, though otherwise much as I had left them nearly sixty years ago, and affording ample proof that I was no artistic prodigy.

I had drawing lessons all the time I was there, but they only consisted, as most drawing lessons did in those days, in learning to copy lithographed landscapes, and I much preferred to draw 'out of my own head'—with the results that were to be expected.

I was not the only amateur artist on these half-holidays; there were one or two others, but they confined themselves to black and white. I was the only colourist, and my flames in red and yellow chalk bursting from the windows of a burning house were much admired. I thought out many striking effects of this sort while I was ostensibly engaged on the football field.

On rare occasions in winter Grimstone would announce that if we got our prep over by a certain time we could act charades, which I thoroughly enjoyed, for I was probably the only boy in the school who had seen theatricals of any kind, and was therefore accepted as an authority on the subject. And as I was rather good at suggesting words and arranging subjects for the syllables, I was director in chief of these entertainments, and, the other fellows entering into the spirit of the thing, we managed to amuse not only ourselves but our audience, which included the Grimstone family. It is true that they were by no means critical, but I don't think we were altogether bad, and anyway those are pleasant evenings to look back upon, especially as there were not very many of them.

In my school work any ardour for knowledge soon left me; I had a good memory, but what I learned I did not learn with much intelligence, and words and facts had no

other meaning for me than as things which I should have to repeat by rote.

By the time I was twelve or so, writing letters home was more pleasure than penance to me.

Not long ago there was an article in the *Evening Standard* by Father Knox in which, after an extremely kind reference to *Vice Versâ*, he said that there were two incidents in the book in which he could never bring himself to believe. One was the dictated letter to parents. This actually happened; I think in my first quarter, and that I was one of those who were required to take it down. If so, I can imagine my mother's mystified enjoyment on its perusal. But, in any case, I was soon allowed to compose my own letters.

The other incident that Father Knox found incredible was Grimstone's custom of meeting boys at the London terminus. I should not have thought myself that this was so very unusual, but it was certainly his habit. I had many journeys back to school with him and a personally conducted party, and I did not find them more agreeable than did Mr. Bultitude. In later years either Grimstone gave up these amenities, or my brother Leonard and I contrived to travel by another train.

It may not have been the best thing for our digestions, but we were all allowed to read during meals, a concession which rendered many a midday dinner less of an ordeal.

Our books were of the kind that boys read in those days—Jules Verne, of course, Gustave Aimard, who dealt in delightfully horrible combats with South American warriors, Marryat, Mayne Reid, and Kingston, an excellent narrator of adventures by marvellous boys in various countries.

There were school stories by a Dr. Adams, and Dean Farrar's *Eric*, and *St. Winifred's*, which latter I am afraid I accepted as lifelike presentments of what went on at public schools. *Lewis Arundel* by Smedley, too, I found

a most fascinating work, and thought it showed an almost uncanny knowledge of the world.

I delighted in *King George's Midshipman* by Dr. Gilbert, with woodcuts by W. S. Gilbert, his son, and was interested, though a little puzzled, by George MacDonald's *At the Back of the North Wind*.

Later I revelled in *The Jumping Frog* and Bret Harte, a sign that my sense of humour was developing, and I read *Dombey and Son* and *Hard Times* for the first time.

Now and then Grimstone would read something aloud to us; once it was one of Artemus Ward's contributions to *Punch*, which appealed to Grimstone: he read it with great gusto and occasional roars of laughter, but my brother Leonard and I were the only ones who found it amusing, which led the others to suspect us of 'sucking up'.

In the autumn of 1868 I went back from Totland Bay to Crichton House for the first time with my brother Leonard. He was pluckier and more high-spirited than I was, and was already a strong swimmer when I could only swim a few strokes. I was not altogether surprised by his light-heartedness during the drive to Yarmouth, but I did think that he would not have sung as he did if he had had any idea of what he was in for. From Yarmouth we went in a lumbering old bus to Cowes, and I remember that in the bus there was a Nonconformist parson who asked us jocular conundrums on Scriptural subjects, and that it was St. Swithun's day and rained heavily. From Cowes we crossed to Portsmouth, and then by rail to 'Market Rodwell', and for the whole of the day, even after our arrival, Leonard kept up his spirits. But the next morning his situation became too much for him, and, to my horror and surprise, he suddenly burst out sobbing in class.

Grimstone was unexpectedly kind about it. I was told to take him out to the small garden next to the

playground and soothe his feelings by a game of croquet. Unfortunately the sight of hoops and balls only reminded him of our own croquet-lawn at Colwell Cottage and increased his misery, while it very nearly set me off too, and our game was a dismally perfunctory performance. For several days he remained inconsolable, until he wore out Grimstone's patience at last by so unaccountable a failure to appreciate his advantages. I think Grimstone never quite forgave this implied criticism, for he was certainly less indulgent and fair to Leonard than to me, and constantly accused him of sulkiness and obstinacy, from which he was perfectly free.

The summer after I left a bigger and heavier boy with whom he had been bathing in the river was seized with cramp, and Leonard swam to him and held him up till the boatman, who was a considerable distance away, came to his assistance. It might have been supposed that Grimstone would have made some mention before the whole school of so gallant a rescue, for Leonard had undoubtedly risked his life to save another's. But nothing was said in public, and the first my parents knew of the affair was through a grateful letter from the boy's mother. However, when Leonard left the school that summer, Grimstone did give him a certificate recording the action, which certificate my mother must have treasured, for it was found among some family documents quite recently, just fifty-nine years after it was written.

It is the fact that neither Leonard nor my youngest brother Walter was often out of more or less hot water at Crichton House, though their conduct was certainly no worse than my own, and I fancy they would have escaped this if they had only been more diplomatic in concealing their first impressions of his establishment.

In August 1869 we were at Westward Ho in lodgings in one of a row of houses which were afterwards converted



into the school of Stalky & Co. During one of our walks along the cliff my father tripped in getting over a stile and broke his right arm, and I remember being impressed by his stoicism after the accident, which kept him indoors for a fortnight or so.

There were athletic sports at Westward Ho that August, and I entered for the quarter-mile race for boys under fourteen. I was a fast runner, and led for about a third of the distance, feeling certain of coming in first. But having no notion of husbanding my wind, I soon ran myself out, boy after boy passed me, and though I finished the course, I was well in the rear by the time I staggered in.

The prizes were given by a Mrs. Scott-Siddons, a very beautiful woman who was on the stage and claimed descent from *the* Mrs. Siddons. I never saw her act, but I have an impression that it was that great actress's beauty rather than her genius that she inherited.

Whenever my brother Leonard and I were driving home from Waterloo at the beginning of the holidays we made a practice of drawing each other's attention to certain buildings as we passed them. 'Look at Astley's Theatre', or 'Look at de Castro's' (the chemist's that is still at the corner of Wilton Place) we would remind one another. This was done simply to provide us with matter for self torment a few weeks later, when we would be taking the same route in the opposite direction. Then we would think—and probably say—'When we last saw such and such a place things were very different with us,' in which reflections we must have found a kind of gloomy satisfaction, or I suppose we shouldn't have done it.

We spent August and part of September in 1870 at Cromer, which was then only accessible by coach from Norwich. The morning papers, with the latest news of the Franco-Prussian War, arrived late, and there was a

rush for them by the visitors, whom I remember sitting on a fence in a row, reading eagerly. We boys had an idea that the Prussians were all excellent God-fearing men with beards, while the French were distinctly no better than they should be, but we thought of war and battles mostly in terms of tin soldiers. At Cromer we were given our first silver watches and chains; the seal on mine had a piece of amethyst glass in it, and I found a strange consolation at evening service on my last Sunday there in obtaining a reflection of the clerestory windows on the surface of my seal. Why, I can't say, but so it was.

Grimstone was curiously credulous at times. On one occasion when the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII, was in Russia, he called the whole school together, and informed us with great solemnity that the Prince had been surrounded by Cossacks and assassinated. Heaven only knows where Grimstone got the report from. I feel certain it was not from any paper. He concluded by a prayer for the Queen and Royal Family, and we sang the National Anthem.

After which, as we never heard any more of the tragic event, we came privately to the conclusion that some one must have been pulling his leg. Which was almost too awful to think of.

There was a day-boarder who was distinctly queer and jumpy, the son of a retired officer. One morning this boy arrived in a very excited state with a thrilling story of how his house had been entered by burglars that night, and how his father had shot one of them, who was lying dead on the drive. We all questioned him, and as I noticed that the burglars seemed to be increasing at each new version like men in buckram, and that at one time the body had been carried away by the others, and at another it was still on the gravel covered by a sheet, I began to have my doubts.

Then Grimstone came down into the playground, and several boys began: 'Oh, please Sir, R.'s house was burgled last night.' Grimstone listened to the story with great concern, then ordered his horse and rode over to Major R.'s to hear further details—only to find that nothing whatever had occurred. But he did not—as some headmasters might have done—visit his fool's errand on the boy, who in all probability fully believed his own story.

There is another recollection I have of Grimstone that seems to me odd enough to be worth setting down.

It was in the summer and must have happened in my last quarter but one at Crichton House. My brothers Leonard, Walter, and I had a dormitory to ourselves. It was a hot July night. I think, although I can't be certain of this, that there had been a violent thunderstorm which was just passing away. Grimstone, as was his custom, was making the round of the dormitories and came into ours. As a rule these visits were brief and perfunctory affairs, but on that night he paced up and down the room in silence for a minute or two, to our extreme uneasiness. And then, as though he had to tell somebody and without any preliminaries, he began to relate an experience of his own.

After over sixty years one cannot be absolutely certain as to details, but the story made such an impression on me that I remember the main facts perfectly.

It was about a groom who had been in his service in another house he had occupied. I quite forget where, if I ever heard. The groom had taken to drink and evil ways generally, and Grimstone, who had made earnest efforts to reform him, had obtained his solemn promise to come up to the house at a certain hour of the evening—I think to sign the pledge. I fancy, too—though again this may be an addition of my own—that the man had sworn that he would come though the Devil himself should try to prevent him.

And Grimstone in his most impressive and dramatic manner went on to describe how the hour drew near, and no groom appeared. How when it struck there was a sound on the outer wall, as if, he said, some vast creature with iron claws was trying to climb up, and then a frightful crash on the roof—and silence.

And, after a pause, he added that the groom was found drowned the next day.

How much of all this was true, and how much his own unconscious invention he probably did not know himself, but I am as certain now as I was then that he believed every word of it.

Why he should have told us I have no idea. But I doubt if we found it as easy to go to sleep that night as we usually did.

I recollect an incident during one of the summer quarters in which Grimstone was concerned, and I thought did not show to advantage.

It was the year when there was the rage for sword-stick duels, and we were most of us carrying on these innocuous combats when he came down the cast-iron staircase and joined us, and following his usual practice of entering into our amusements, borrowed a stick himself and called up a boy to engage him.

The boy was not very big and was decidedly getting the worst of it, when one of the day-boarders—a tall handsome fellow of about eighteen, whose father was a retired Indian civil servant—suddenly suggested that Grimstone should take him on instead.

Grimstone was quite willing, and for a time the engagement was fought according to rule. And then we were amazed to see that he had lost his temper and was fighting in earnest, not only slashing but cutting with all his considerable strength. The day-boarder held his own and gave as good as he got, and Grimstone's nose was bleeding before he dealt a tremendous blow at his

antagonist's head, which shattered his own sword-stick but luckily did the day-boarder no serious injury.

Whereupon he became aware that he had somewhat compromised his dignity, broke off the combat, and presently called us all in.

Nothing was said about the affair, but we found that from that day Grimstone viewed our sword-stick exercises with a less favourable eye, and it was not long before they were abandoned altogether.

In the summer of 1871 six or seven of us were taken up to Burlington House to undergo the Cambridge Local Examination for boys under fourteen—a new experience which, if only as an escape from Crichton House, I found pleasant enough, especially as it involved tea with rolls and pats of butter in the restaurant afterwards.

At the next desk to me during these examinations sat a boy I didn't know but liked the look of. We got into conversation afterwards and struck up a friendship. On the final day we exchanged names and addresses; I remember his name now, which was Prideaux, and how I wrote it down on a scrap of paper against one of the pillars of the Burlington Arcade.

I feel it will be expected that this was the beginning of a friendship that has lasted both our lives. I wish I could add this, but as a matter of fact we never wrote to one another for some reason, and I never saw him again.

But I still feel that I have missed something.

When we got back after the last day's papers, there was a grand inquisition by Grimstone of the answers we had given respectively.

Two of the party had evidently done brilliantly—all their answers had been correct. I suspect they had taken the opportunity to consult their text-books before the inquisition. Anyway, neither of them passed.

As for me, my case was pronounced parlous, chiefly on

account of an outline map of France on which we were required to insert the cities.

In drawing maps I had paid more attention to tracing three lines in blue ink round the coasts and caterpillar mountain ranges than to the less decorative details, so that I filled up France mainly by conjecture, and it was hardly a happy thought of mine to place Bordeaux on the Riviera. But it looked the sort of place for it at the time.

We spent our holiday at Whitby that year, and the first part of it—my parents having been told that I was a certain failure—was coloured by dismal anticipations of returning to school under that stigma.

When the news came that I had passed in the second class I felt exactly as I always did later when a publisher or editor accepted my work—intense and almost incredulous relief, and a feeling that my world had suddenly become bright and beautiful.

There are not so many experiences in one's life that one would care to have over again, but that is certainly one of them.

The last quarter at Crichton House passed not unpleasantly. The fellows I most disliked, and who in little ways had shown their animosity at times, had left, and with the others I was on excellent terms.

Grimstone must have thought I showed some literary capacity, for he set me to read an article in one of the reviews on the Franco-Prussian War and write an essay on it. Which I did, and I remember it began with a description of the French Army starting for the front as 'the brilliant cavalcade which rode out to battle so gaily through the Arc de Triomphe'. So I'm afraid I had not read the article to much purpose. Another special task was translating Cowper's letters into French; I don't know whether a Frenchman would have found my version intelligible, but it was never corrected by anybody.

I studied a little book which instructed one in the art of

writing Latin verse, but didn't make much of it. Still, I was excused the ordinary work of the class, which was all to the good.

Children are not always apt to find their parents' friends personally attractive, but we were fortunate in this respect. The child must have been hard to please who would not have been drawn to our chief family friends, two middle-aged Scotsmen named Macmorran and Paterson respectively. Both were bachelors and well to do, both were quiet kindly Scots of the best type. Christmas would not have been a perfectly cheery time for us if both or either had been absent from our dinner-table.

And this was not because they always brought us gifts of books, and books so well chosen that they exactly suited our tastes; we had a very genuine affection for the donors, and with good reason, for each had the art of putting children at their ease and making the home seem happier by their mere presence.

Neither of them ever married; Mr. Macmorran, after living in lodgings, comfortable but ordinary, for the greater part of his life, bought a large house at Putney, furnished it with the artistic judgement that was his by instinct, and made it a home for his nephews and nieces.

Mr. Paterson had a dry but genial humour which we appreciated; I think he must have been indifferent to his surroundings, for although he could well have afforded a house of his own and was the reverse of niggardly, he died as he had lived in furnished lodgings which had no other recommendations than being neat and clean.

Mr. Macmorran survived my father by some years and continued to be our valued friend to the last.

By the time my brother and I were at King's College School, a brilliant young nephew of Mr. Macmorran's

was a frequent and always a welcome guest at my father's table. He was about four years my senior and had just in 1872 taken his degree at Edinburgh University and had entered the Middle Temple, of which Inn it was owing to him that I became a member a few years later. He became a Q.C. in 1896, and afterwards a Bencher of his Inn and the recognized authority on all matters connected with Local Government and the Poor Law, &c. In spite of his superior years we boys always found him a sympathetic and humorous companion, and he was one of the first to recognize and encourage my earliest productions in print.

My father's most intimate friend was a cloth merchant in Warwick Street of the name of Wain. He was a portly but particularly handsome man with regular features, a peculiarly clear complexion, pale auburn whiskers, and remarkably well-formed hands; he was married and lived in a small house with pleasant grounds at Hersham, where he loved to take part in a run with the local beagles—not that he ever ran himself, but, from his knowledge of the ground, he always managed somehow to be in touch with the pack.

He had no children but was always a kind and generous friend to us boys. Once, when my father had brought my brother Leonard and me up from Hastings at the end of the Easter holidays and then found there was no train from Waterloo to 'Market Rodwell' until the afternoon, we were taken to Warwick Street and thence to lunch with Mr. Wain at Blanchard's in Beak Street. This was a welcome respite enough, but just when we were dismally aware that it was nearly over he suddenly proposed that we should spend the afternoon at Hengler's Circus, which we did riotously and returned to Grimstone's by an evening train with consoling memories of clowns and circus horses, not to mention a parting tip.

One summer term Grimstone took or sent—I forget



which—some of us to a Flower Show at the neighbouring market town. And suddenly my brother and I came upon Mr. and Mrs. Wain in one of the tents, and he treated not only us but all our party to unlimited strawberry ices and presented Leonard and me with half a sovereign apiece, part of which I remember we spent on a large potted pelargonium.

It glowed all that summer term outside our dormitory window and filled us with mystic joy and pride. When we returned to school in the autumn we were almost consoled by the fact that our faithful plant was still in luxuriant blossom. For once we had spent our money not unwisely.

In the late sixties Mr. Wain went into partnership with a much younger man, Robert Pirie Shiell, who won our hearts from our first acquaintanceship with him. A Scotsman by birth he had spent most of his boyhood in London, and not only had he lost all trace of his native land, but I have never known any one who was a more perfect embodiment of the best type of Cockney humour. It was he from whom in one of my 'Voces' I borrowed the comment on a clock elaborately chiming the half-hour, 'And all that for only half-past five!'

At times he rose to an inspired buffoonery, as when once on visiting my brother's office in Bedford Row, he found the office boy sitting on a high stool in the clerks' room behind a barrier and leaning across it paralysed that youth by saying in broken accents, 'Not guilty, my lord!'

He had a genial pleasantly plain face, and was always neat and correct in his attire. Like our other Scots friends he had the gift of raising by his mere presence the spirits of any circle he came into; he had a shrewd knowledge of the world, and if I had been in need of advice I know no one to whom as a young man I would sooner have gone or who would have given it more kindly.

I have mentioned all these friends of my earlier years because they were an inseparable part of them and also because they unconsciously helped to influence and shape my career. And indeed they were friends on whom any boy born into a higher layer of the middle class than I would have good cause to congratulate himself.

### III

## *King's College School*

EARLY in 1872 I went as a day-boarder to King's College School in the Strand, and found it a heavenly change from Crichton House.

I was put into the Upper Fourth, and did not find that my 'prep' at home took up much of my time. When it was done I sat in the drawing-room, listening to my mother's playing while I read *The Ingoldsby Legends*, and thanked my stars for ordering that I should know no more 'Black Mondays'.

Even the journeys home were full of novelty and interest, for I travelled up and down by Underground with a season ticket, kept my head out of the window in the tunnels—and it was all tunnels—to observe the signals change from green or red to violet, and got out at every station for the sake of prolonging the pleasure. But of course these delights palled in time.

My class master was the Rev. William Hayes, who was also the Chaplain of St. Katharine's College, Regent's Park, where he lived. I have drawn his portrait in the opening chapter of *The Giant's Robe*, and I hope not unsympathetically, for I was fond of him in a way, though at first he alarmed me considerably. As *The Giant's Robe* has been long out of print, and few of the younger generation will be acquainted with it, I may as well describe him once more.

His face distinctly suggested one of the grotesque figures that used to be constructed out of lobster claws and embellished by a fringe of white hair and a black velvet toque. His eyes were grey and quick, like a parrot's, his nose prominent, his mouth thin-lipped, and his complexion a clear healthy brick-red.

His classroom was in the basement, with a long dark corridor outside, and small boys from the Lower School found it an irresistible temptation to open his door, yelp 'Lobster!' and bolt for all they were worth. This always drove him furious; he would often dart out in pursuit, and arrest the nearest boy, who invariably turned out to be innocent.

But he kept order in his classroom, and I learnt a good deal from him, beginning with the discovery that accurate translation of each word in a Latin author was required rather than the impressionist rendering of the general sense of a passage, which had been considered good enough for Crichton House, and though I thought him over particular on this point, I found it necessary to humour him.

Under 'Billy'—as we always called him, leaving 'Lobster' to be used by the Lower School—I acquired some facility in composing dog-Latin verses, and a distinct liking for Horace's Odes. There were chapters in Smith's *Greek and Roman History* and Maclear's *Old Testament* to be studied and questioned upon, and of course the Eton Latin primer and Greek grammar, also some English poetry of remarkably poor quality (one poem was by Martin Tupper) to be learnt by heart.

This, so far as I remember, was the work we did in the Fourth Form, and I did not find it at all difficult. Billy appointed me his monitor, and I was head of his form for two terms before I was moved up to the Fifth.

Saturdays were of course half-holidays, and for the first few weeks I induced my father to come with me on some expedition or other.

The Prince of Wales—later King Edward VII—had lain at the point of death all through December, and then had slowly recovered. There was to be a Public Thanksgiving Day, and my father and I drove in a hansom all round the City to see the decorations. On the day itself

we stood together in the crowd opposite Stanhope Gate to see the procession. Postmen drove about in little carts with smart trotting horses in those days, and I remember that while we waited one postman drove along the route bowing graciously, wiping his eyes with a handkerchief, and affecting to be deeply touched by his reception. There is generally a *farceur* of his kind on these occasions.

I can see, too, the face of a young girl near us—a fresh round face with red lips and white teeth; she did not belong to the respectable class, however, and as the conversation around her became rather coarse, my father protested on my account. I thought he need not have troubled.

At last the Prince drove by in an open carriage, the Queen sitting on his right side, and the applause and emotion were tremendous. We remarked that he still looked pale and worn, as they went on their way to St. Paul's.

Those were two of my outings with my father, but gradually, for some reason I forget, my Saturday afternoons with him came to an end with that Easter.

As a rule I escaped serious trouble in Billy's form, but there was one day of disaster. He caught me prompting a neighbour in distress, gave me a hundred lines, and sent me up to the Detention Room, with the words 'For prompting' written large at the top of my imposition sheet.

I had not been writing long when Dr. Maclear, the headmaster, entered majestically, and I gave myself up for lost, knowing well that prompting was a swishable offence.

He came up to my seat—which I should have liked to crawl under—looked over my shoulder, and read the fatal words.

And then, just when I was expecting an invitation to his private room, he passed on in silence. But I didn't feel really safe till he had left the Detention Room.

I spent an extra hour from three to four twice a week in learning drawing under De la Motte. I liked him, but drawing wooden cones and cylinders did not amuse me particularly, and I gave up the lessons after my first term, which was foolish, as I had a decided turn for drawing, though only for drawing 'out of my own head', as being far easier to do.

After school was over I often walked home through the Strand to Buckingham Palace and on by the Kensington Road to Phillimore Gardens, or round by Ebury Street and Sloane Street, which walks were my only form of exercise for a time.

I could of course have joined cricket or football teams or gone to the gymnasium, if I had cared to do so. But it would have taken some time to reach the grounds, and besides I had had enough of cricket and football, and gymnastics too, at Crichton House.

Later, when my brother Leonard had joined me at King's, we learned riding together at a school not many yards from the room in which I write, and our half-holidays were spent in the Riding School and the Row, till we were considered good enough horsemen to be trusted to go out by ourselves.

One of our amusements in the winter holidays while we were still at Crichton House was a cardboard theatre, on the stage of which Leonard and I produced several plays, amongst them *The Corsican Brothers*, *The Brigand*, *Oliver Twist*, *The Miller and his Men*, *The Waterman*, and *The Daughter of the Regiment*. Whoever condensed the original dramas and designed the scenes and characters had done the work extraordinarily well, for when, years afterwards, I saw Irving in *The Corsican Brothers*, with the original effects, most of the scenes corresponded closely to those in our miniature version.

Our little stage was lighted by wicks in a tin pan full of oil sunk in an opening; we thought they had a pleasant

and exciting smell, though our audiences were not always of the same opinion. Performances were given before the servants or friends in the basement room, or upstairs before our father and mother, and when the cardboard characters did not fall on their faces at supreme moments—which they generally did—our efforts were fairly well appreciated, though I remember we had to bribe my youngest brother with gifts before he could be induced to sit out the second night of a piece.

We never attempted sensational effects, such as the blowing up of the mill, or Louis's vision of the duel, but we burnt red fire at the wings occasionally, much to our own satisfaction.

At least one boy of a much later generation was far more enterprising; my friend Mr. Denis Mackail built himself a magnificent stage, which he lighted by electricity, designing and painting the scenery, &c., himself, and producing Shakespeare in an abbreviated but most artistic form. Electricity was long after our managerial times, but even if it had not been, I doubt if we should have soared above oil, and I at least had no skill in carpentering.

Before I had been at King's a year Leonard joined me there, and we worked and slept in the same room, agreeing fairly well for a time at all events, and taking our walks together. One afternoon in the window of a toy-shop in Westbourne Grove we saw a ridiculous little magic lantern which, as it only cost sixpence, we bought.

Rather to our surprise it did throw a circle, and even a suggestion of a coloured slide, on a pocket handkerchief pinned against the wall, and this gave us the ambition to possess a magic lantern that had more pretensions to the name.

We had seen one at an optician's in the Strand, but it was expensive and we had only a shilling a week each for pocket money. We decided to save our shillings between

then and Christmas, and, though I had hard work at times to secure my brother's contribution, we amassed enough with our Christmas boxes to buy our lantern the day after Boxing Day. But it was not the lantern of our dreams; it smoked, and went dim, and its painted slides were disappointingly commonplace. However, when my father heard of this he was so impressed by our story that he gave us the money which enabled us to exchange the first for a higher-grade lantern with all the latest improvements.

The second purchase was a great success. We hired or bought additional slides for it and gave entertainments. I got a local glazier to cut me long strips of glass, on which I painted scenes and processions in indian ink.

I had a 'Gallant Show' as well, which, as such things have long disappeared, I may describe as an upright frame like a proscenium across the central part of which is stretched a white linen screen. A light was placed behind this, and figures cut out in cardboard and placed against the screen showed as sharp black silhouettes when seen from the front. I drew and cut out scenery and characters for several little shadow dramas, and whether these were found entertaining or not, their production occupied me very pleasantly, though my prep work at home was less thorough in consequence than it might and should have been.

Some time in 1873 I started a periodical which, with remarkable unoriginality, I called *The Home Journal*; it was written and illustrated in pen and ink on plain sheets of notepaper, and came out as often as a number was completed. When we went to a theatre or show of any kind there would be sketches of the *mise en scène*. I remember several which were intended to represent Mr. and Mrs. Kendal in *The Overland Route* at the Haymarket; the illustrations had no artistic merit whatever, but, though drawn from memory, were accurate in detail. The series



of comic incidents and such letterpress as there was were quite pathetically un-funny, as I realized not very many years ago when the bound volume turned up.

So, not feeling any reason to be proud of these early efforts at Humour, I made haste to destroy the volume, as not being by any means one of the records that could leap to light and leave me unashamed. At the time, however, I was pleasantly surprised by my own achievement. My father, it is true, criticized my drawing on the ground that it was not 'anatomical'—which it certainly was not—but it was a great deal easier to do than the correct kind, and it never occurred to me then or at Cambridge to spend a few hours a week at a life-school. If I had, I should probably have become an indifferent black-and-white draughtsman and nothing more. So it is just as well that I took art no more seriously than I'm afraid I did any other career in my later teens.

I also drew would-be comic illustrations to Horace, Homer, Shakespeare, and Gray's 'Bard', which I gave away, and which I have every reason to hope were not preserved.

I am afraid that what sense of humour I possessed was exhibited at the expense of my sister, and by no means in the kindest spirit. For instance, she had a manuscript book in which she copied out any stories, facts, &c., that interested her, and I filled many pages of it with elegant extracts of my own invention. And on finding her Mrs. Markham's *History of France*, the top of each chapter of which is illustrated by engravings from contemporary drawings, I had what I considered the happy thought of enlivening them.

In the current number of *Fun*, which we took in, there happened to be a grotesque outline drawing by Brough of Guy Fawkes and his fellow conspirators, whose heads I cut out and pasted neatly on the necks of various personages in French history. A crude and schoolboyish

joke at its best, and one which my sister could not be expected to appreciate; naturally she complained to my mother, who was about to scold me as I certainly deserved. Only, when she actually saw my desecrations she was so overcome with laughter that her indignation lost much of its effect.

My sister has the book still, with all my improvements retained, and neither of us can look on them unmoved. There is one figure in particular purporting to represent 'Robert the Pious' kneeling in prayer, whose head I had thought fit to replace by one of Catesby, in a conical flat-brimmed hat, and with one eye closed and a protruding tongue, which still affords me an unholy satisfaction.

All this, I am aware, shows a deplorable want of reverence, and it is true enough that from a fairly early age I was possessed by a devil of burlesque whose humour was very far from subtle.

Gradually I was moved up into the Sixth, and amongst my class-mates and friends were George Millar, who later became my brother-in-law, Sidney—afterwards Sir Sidney Low, and Alfred W. Pollard, the distinguished authority on Early English literature, who, until he retired in 1924, was Keeper of Printed Books at the British Museum. My brother-in-law died many years ago, just when he had begun to make his name and fortune at the Bar. The other two I am proud still to be able to number among my friends.

These three already showed the promise which they afterwards fulfilled at Oxford and Cambridge. I showed none; I got through my work without much difficulty, but with little interest—I did no more than was unavoidable, and I had very little real scholarship. My Latin verse and prose were fairly good, because I happened to like Latin, but my Greek iambs were poor, my method of rendering a passage from Shakespeare or Milton into Greek verse

being first to reduce it into the crudest form, look out the Greek equivalents for the words in the Lexicon, and add as many 'de's' and 'kai's' as the metre required. And as, in spite of elaborate rules, I never mastered the accentuation, and as a quarter of a mark was deducted for each misplaced accent, I was generally minus a good many marks even on my best performances.

In mathematics I was considerably worse. I remember getting as far in algebra as quadratic equations, and some mysterious things that were called surds, but without any clear notion of how they were done. I could follow the logic of a problem in Euclid well enough, but I could never do a rider on the simplest of them.

Luckily for me, as I was on the Classical and not the Modern side, I was not called upon to take my mathematical work seriously, and I certainly did not.

The only subject in which I took any real and intelligent interest was English literature, and that was thanks to the late Professor J. W. Hales, from whom I gained a sense of the beauties of phrasing and the value of words. Our holiday task one summer was to learn *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* by heart, and so far from finding it irksome as I expected, it was distinctly enjoyable.

But on the whole I was neither industrious nor brilliant.

I forget whether it was our own idea or my father's that Leonard and I should go for a fortnight's walking tour together in North Wales, but in August 1874 we left the rest of the family in lodgings at Shanklin, and made Shrewsbury our starting-point. It rained heavily most of the time we were in Wales, and, in spite of waterproofs, we generally arrived at our hotel drenched to the skin; the knapsacks which were our sole luggage hurt our shoulders, and as my father did not think it safe to give us more than five pounds at a time, the notes being sent in advance to post offices on our route, we had to keep an

anxious eye on our expenses, and, at first-rate hotels, wonder uncomfortably whether we had enough to pay the bill.

Once, after leaving Harlech, we found that we had only a shilling or two left, with two days' walking before us before we could obtain our next five pounds. But we came upon a good Samaritan, a naturalized German who had settled in business at Liverpool, and after questioning us—he was very inquisitive and rather brusque—kindly took us to lunch with his family at their lodgings, and lent us enough money to carry on with for our next two stages.

We went up Snowdon with a party and guide. One of the party, I recollect, was a talkative person with lordly views; some one had grumbled at the guide's fee, which he thought extortionate, the lordly man said it was only too moderate, when the guide's services were taken into account, and enlarged on them with much eloquence.

When we got down again we heard the guide remark that the talkative gentleman had disappeared suddenly, without giving him a penny.

Our walking tour was not without its drawbacks, but we enjoyed the sense of adventure and independence it afforded, and it was a useful experience in its way.

Still, I think we were neither of us sorry to return to Shanklin and sunshine, and rides on hired hacks over Bembridge downs.

At the end of the October term in 1874, *The Frogs* of Aristophanes was, with English, French, and German plays, performed in the Great Hall of King's College. George Millar was the Dionysos, Sidney Low the Xanthias, and I the first hostess. I was made up to resemble a sort of Grecian Mrs. Gamp, and my entrance nearly upset Dionysos's gravity, but, after getting through my first fifteen lines or so without difficulty, I found I had utterly forgotten the rest. However, I had enough

presence of mind to repeat the first lines with a different intonation, and, as I expected, no one in front noticed that anything was wrong. Perhaps they found my accent difficult to follow.

As my brother and I grew older, we were sometimes allowed on half-holidays, on the understanding that our home work had been done, to go to a theatre together or separately. We went of course to the pit, waiting outside till the doors were opened; the queue had not been introduced in those days, and after battling through a wild scrum, we staggered down the rake of the pit to secure front seats. At some theatres—the Haymarket was one of them—the pit extended as far as the orchestra. One got value for one's money in those days, the performances beginning with a farce at 7.30, followed by a three-act comedy, and often ending with a burlesque. This latter we missed, as we had to leave before the burlesque began so as to be at home before the front door was locked, for we were not allowed latchkeys. The theatre area being a long way from Phillimore Gardens, there was generally trouble with my father when we got back, but that was a small price to pay for three hours in Paradise.

We saw David James and Thomas Thorne in *Our Boys*, Honey and Miss Marion Terry in *Engaged*, John Clayton in *All for Her*, and Edward Terry in *Nemesis*. One summer evening I went to the old Olympic by myself, and, as one of a very scanty audience, saw a comedy by the late James Albery, called *The Spendthrift*, which Press and Public alike had pronounced a failure.

I thought it charming myself, and it must have had some good qualities or I should not remember it as vividly as I do. It was an eighteenth-century play, and it opened in a lonely lane with a big oak-tree in it; a small boy's kite had become entangled in the upper branches, and he appealed to the spendthrift, Mr. Henry Neville,

to get it back for him. Which the hero did, and while up in the tree, like Charles the Second, he overheard Sir Howard Jelly (a poltroon) arranging with hired confederates that they were to make an attack on the heroine's sedan chair, and allow him to come to the rescue and drive them off. The sedan chair came on, and of course it was the Spendthrift who upset their arrangements. And the moment Miss Emily Fowler in powdered hair and hoops stepped out of that sedan chair, I was a gone boy. Each evening until the run of the piece ended, which was only too soon, I found myself thinking after eight o'clock had struck, 'Now she's just come on . . . now she's getting out of the sedan chair . . . now he's making love to her' . . . and so forth.

Powder and costume enhanced her looks, but her voice was one of the most enchanting I have ever heard on the stage. I was amazed when I read that the play was a hopeless failure, and I still think, from what I recollect of it, that it deserved a better fate.

On summer afternoons when school was over we often formed small parties and had half an hour's swim in the Paddington Baths before going home. And on half-holidays I generally got my prep done as soon as I could, and, leaving my brother Leonard playing the violin to my mother's accompaniment on the piano (there are times when the gavottes and bourrées they played still distinctly return to my mind's ear), I would start for a long walk.

My favourite route was over Ladbroke Hill and across Kensal Green, where in those days the country began and there was a field path with stiles to Cricklewood. Near Cricklewood a small square farm-house with barns and ricks stood on a slope, and at the head of a steep lane there was a row of old cottages, outside one of which I once saw a woman making lace. At Cricklewood there was actually

a sign-post, and a rural tree-bordered road as far as Brondesbury, from which I eventually came into bustling Kilburn, and home via Westbourne Grove and Notting Hill, having walked I suppose some twelve or fourteen miles.

It was not a strenuous form of exercise, but I enjoyed it and it kept me in health.

At the end of the summer term, my last at King's, I went up for the Public Schools Examination for boys who were going to either of the universities. Any one who passed would be excused Smalls at Oxford or the Little-go at Cambridge, but, unless I am mistaken, it was necessary to satisfy the examiners in all or a majority of the subjects.

Mathematics had never been my strong suit, I was fairly good in French, and had learnt some German at Crichton House. But as I rose in the school, the Greek and Latin exercises and verses and English literature took up so much of my time for home work that mathematics, French, and German were mostly neglected. I did tolerably in the Classical and English papers, but the French paper did not suit me and I answered very few questions in that or the German, while in mathematics I was, of course, hopeless.

The names of the successful candidates were announced in *The Times* during the summer holidays. Millar's, Low's, Pollard's, and other of my companions' names were in the list, but I was not at all surprised to find that my own did not appear there. And as I had taken the (I hope) pardonable precaution of not mentioning the examination to my father, *he* was not surprised either.

My failure meant spending the October term at Cambridge in preparing for the Little-go, but as I passed that easily enough, I did not lose so very much.

## IV

### *Cambridge*

**I** SUPPOSE my father must have entered me at Trinity Hall because he had been told that it was the proper college for intending barristers. Anyway, he could not have made a happier choice. The Hall was a comparatively small college, but the freshmen of my year were pleasant and sociable, and I had not been up long before I found friends.

No one there asked me what my father was, and I did not consider there was any necessity to volunteer the information. It might not have made them less friendly if I had, though I think in the majority of cases it would have produced a somewhat chilling effect at that period. One is frequently told that all prejudice against trade has now disappeared—but I doubt it. Ben Latham, or 'Old Ben', as he was always called, certainly knew all about my birth and origin, for my father had very wisely told him what his occupation was, and probably given the fullest information as to his private affairs, which he was not in the habit of keeping to himself on any occasion.

I daresay dear Old Ben got some amusement out of the interview, but he evidently found something to like and respect in him, for he invited him to dine that night at the high table, and, according to my father, was most entertaining.

And, as my father was quite capable of setting an archbishop right on a point of divinity, or instructing the Astronomer Royal in the motions of the planets, it is not unlikely that Ben was entertained in return.

Ben was always the kindest of friends to me, and, as every Hall man must have done who had the privilege of being under his gentle sway, I felt a very deep



affection for and had the greatest reasons to be grateful to him.

I went up to Cambridge in October 1875, and during that term was in lodgings over a grocer's in Trumpington Street opposite Corpus.

I attended lectures on Aristophanes's *Birds*, and other subjects which were set for the Little-go, and went to Ben's study on certain evenings, and did, or tried to do, problems in trigonometry and statics.

The Greek and Latin and Divinity subjects for the Little-go gave me little trouble, and I did not think it necessary to work for more than an hour or two after dinner in hall. When they were disposed of I was free, when alone, to indulge my passion for scribbling, and was seized by the idea of writing a little burlesque play in blank verse with lyrics, and submitting it to my old school for performance there at Christmas.

I wrote into the small hours in an ecstasy of composition, and sent the result to the Dramatic Committee with hopes of acceptance, which a little self-criticism would have warned me were too sanguine, for my play was quite undramatic, having little or no action.

The odd thing is that it was seriously considered and very nearly accepted by the Committee of Masters, one of whom advocated it warmly and contributed a line or two to my dialogue.

However, they very wisely thought better of it, but the letter in which they informed me of their decision was so kindly and considerately worded, and commended my performance for its humour and sense of character in such terms that I felt rather encouraged than dejected.

Before the end of that term, I had another, and, I thought, a better idea for a burlesque, and what is more had found a collaborator in another Hall freshman who sat next me at lectures. His name was Walter Frith, a son of the famous R.A., and as we walked back to our lodgings

together we were not long in discovering that we both had an ambition to write, and agreed to collaborate.

There was something in my idea, which was to adapt *The Birds* as a skit on university life, substituting a Cloud-Cuckoo-land University for Aristophanes's City.

But neither of us had the requisite knowledge and experience to work it out successfully. We met at one another's houses in that Christmas vacation to discuss it. Walter Frith wrote some lyrics, which he afterwards published in *The Cambridge Tatler*, and sang to his own accompaniment on the piano at wine-parties with great effect. I contributed nothing, and our projected burlesque was soon abandoned.

However, it was the beginning of a friendship that has lasted ever since, and without which, as will be seen later, I should probably never have had any success as a writer.

Like all other freshmen, I joined my College Boat Club, but as I was too light, my weight being only 8 stone, to row in an eight, I was set down to cox. I might, I believe, have insisted on being tubbed, i.e. taught to row, notwithstanding, but I suppose I found that coxing took up enough of my afternoons as it was; at any rate I did not learn to row properly until a year or so after I had left Cambridge, when George Millar, who had been captain of one of the Trinity boats, made a passable oarsman of me on Windermere Lake.

I soon acquired such art as is needed for steering an eight, and rather liked it than otherwise, but though I steered in several races, the boat ahead always kept at a distance which gave us no chance of making our bump. That, however, was no fault of mine, as my steering was never called in question.

On such afternoons as I was not required, I double-sculled or rowed, after a fashion, with friends on the Cam towards Baitsbite and back, or explored the upper river

to Chesterton in a canoe. And there were walks and, later, rides on the old high bicycle with a companion. So the afternoons passed pleasantly enough.

In the mornings there were two lectures of an hour each to attend, and an hour's work in one's rooms; in the evenings the first hour after Hall was spent in visiting or entertaining one's friends, and the others till bed-time in such work as one felt inclined for. I spent some of that time in reading fiction, improving my acquaintance with Thackeray, Charlotte Brontë, and George Eliot, and refreshing my knowledge of French with novels by Daudet, Feuillet, and George Sand, which last were sent me by my mother.

I was a member of the Union Society, of course, like every freshman who did not belong to the Pitt or Athenaeum, and attended the weekly debates, though I never spoke at one and greatly envied and admired Frith when I heard him make a most original and amusing speech there, which I would have given a great deal to be able to do myself. But I was never a very effective speaker, and the Union audience was a difficult one to address, being critical when it was not absorbed in reading newspapers.

As a Club the Union was a pleasant and comfortable place in which one could spend an hour or two before Hall with the latest magazines and reviews, and in the Library were bound volumes of these, including *The Saturday*, which latter did me the service of correcting my taste in fiction, which had till then been quite indiscriminating.

During the last months of my schooldays I had become a confirmed novel-reader. There was a circulating library almost opposite Phillimore Gardens, where I got—one volume at a time—the works of all the popular novelists of the day—Wilkie Collins, Charles Reade, Whyte-Melville, Lawrence, the author of *Guy Livingstone*, Miss Braddon, 'Ouida', Miss Rhoda Broughton, Edmund

Yates, and Le Fanu, all of which I devoured with impartial admiration.

At the Union it occurred to me to look up the notices of these works in the *Saturday Review*, and see how far the reviewer's opinion coincided with my own. In many cases I found it did not. Incidents and passages that I had thought magnificent were held up to ridicule and denounced as pretentious nonsense; for the first time I realized that restraint in style and description was a valuable literary quality, and that 'fine writing' might have a fatal element of unconscious humour.

Some of my idols remained on their pedestals, but there were others who were badly shaken, and one or two who toppled over altogether under these onslaughts. It is true that a 'Saturday Reviewer' of that period had his *bêtes noires*, and dealt with them rather more savagely than they deserved, but I accepted his attacks as unquestioningly as I had previously admired the victims.

No review could have dethroned Dickens or Thackeray for me, but the *Saturday's* showed me that there were degrees among lesser novelists. I acquired some idea at last of what a good writer should aim at, and what he should avoid. And I decided that if I ever attempted to write, it should at least be something that would not excite the ridicule of a 'Saturday Reviewer'.

But in my first year at the Hall any time I could spare was given not to writing, but to pen-and-ink drawing. I illustrated, in a disrespectful spirit, certain episodes in the *Aeneid* and *Iliad*, which drawings were photographed and sold on a royalty basis by Messrs. Hills and Saunders, and attracted some attention. In imitation of 'Bab' I signed these 'Dod', which was my youngest brother's family name, and my responsibility for them was known only by a few of my particular friends. The drawings had naturally no artistic merit, but I think showed a certain invention and humour. I made a few pounds by them,

which came in usefully—not that I was ever short of cash at Cambridge. My father paid all my necessary expenses himself, and allowed me five pounds a month for pocket-money, which I found ample as a rule. So I had no temptation to run up debts, and it is no credit to me that I did not.

In the autumn of 1876 my literary ambition revived. There was a weekly paper called *The Undergraduates' Journal*, which owed its circulation (chiefly among clergymen) to the fact that it published weekly reports of the university sermons. To this I sent two poems in a would-be humorous vein, and as these were accepted, I followed them by the first efforts of mine in prose that appeared in print—a series of burlesque stories of university life, which I called 'Told to a Grandmother'. They were feebly imitative of W. S. Gilbert, of whose humour I was, and for that matter still am, an admirer, but they had no literary merit whatever. I wrote a letter signed 'A Constant Reader' to the Editor, in which I objected to the stories as being devoid of all plausibility, and was gratified to find that several other correspondents wrote expressing their agreement with me, and pointing out incidents which they considered—with perfect justice—too improbable to be convincing.

I only mention these stories here because it was in some degree owing to them that I came to write the story that developed into *Vice Versâ*.

For the first year freshmen who had entered for the Law Tripos were not expected to read Law, and I found the college exam. in the Classics and English Literature an easy matter enough, even though I had certainly not overworked myself.

I thought it would be quite time enough to work when the legal training began.

In the summer of 1876 I went abroad for the first time with the Youngs, from Brussels up the Rhine to Switzerland. At Berne Clarence Young was taken ill with

typhoid, and I stayed there with his parents till it was time to make my way back to London. On wet days I sketched a burlesque in blank verse, with Harold and William the Conqueror, Matilda and Stigand, as the chief characters, without any definite object, for even I never imagined that it was suitable for any stage, and by the time the October term began I had recognized that my burlesque was hopeless and torn it up.

In the autumn of 1876 I was entered at the Middle Temple, and I went down from Cambridge at intervals to eat the requisite three dinners in mess, and began reading for the Law Tripos.

I read conscientiously enough, but not very intelligently. Most of the subjects did not appeal to me, and I had a delusive impression that merely reading text-books without thoroughly understanding or remembering their contents was equivalent to mastering them. I put much faith in devices for imprinting on my memory such facts as the provisions of various statutes, but I seldom had any clear idea of the abuses those statutes were designed to remove or how precisely they removed them.

I have sometimes thought that if in those days I had read the earlier chapters of Macaulay's *History* before ploughing through Stubbs, my imagination would have been stirred, and I should have gained the clear insight into the stages of constitutional law which I certainly never acquired.

Roman law was a subject in the examination for call to the Bar, for which undergraduates could go up while they were still at Cambridge, and, as I liked Roman law because it struck me as rather more human than the other branches, I went in for that part in my third year and passed without difficulty. But this may have been due to the fact that the examining body, while intending to set a paper on all Justinian but a few chapters, had by some

mistake selected those few chapters and excluded all the rest, which, fortunately for me, was not discovered until too late.

If I ever pictured myself as a barrister in actual practice it was only dimly, and without much faith that the vision would ever become realized. But I did not see what else I could be. I knew that my taste for amateur drawing was not enough to justify me in choosing art as a profession, and much as I enjoyed writing, it did not seem likely to me that I should ever make a living by it. So I drifted on, without looking forward, trusting (when I thought about it at all) that I should acquire the legal mind and forensic skill by some automatic process, much as chrysalis without taking thought gradually develops into a butterfly.

In the spring of 1877 my friend Walter Frith, together with a scholar of Trinity named Pashley, started a weekly paper for undergraduates under the title of *The Cambridge Tatler*, and on the strength, such as it was, of my series in *The Undergraduates' Journal*, I was asked to contribute to the new venture.

I had written one paper for it, when Frith suggested that I should do a serial story, which I agreed to furnish as soon as I could hit upon an idea. As before, I found inspiration in my Master's work. 'The Bab Ballads' abounded in magic transformations and exchanges of bodies. Could not I contrive something on similar lines? And suddenly it occurred to me that it might be amusing to send a father back to school in place of his son. It would not be difficult to arrange the machinery of the story, and as it was not many years since the Crichton House days, the local colour and details did not need to be invented—they were ready to hand.

So I began, and the opening and several subsequent instalments appeared in *The Tatler*, though I never heard any one at Cambridge express an opinion of them, favourable or otherwise. But I had not written more than about

a quarter of 'Turned Tables'—as I first called my story—when both it and *The Tatler* came to an untimely end.

I was taking up a paper in the Summer Term exam. when the don to whom I handed it, and who happened to be a friend of mine, said: 'So I hear you've got yourself into trouble over *The Tatler*.' It was the first I had heard of it, and I asked him for further information, whereon it appeared that Frith had written an article, purporting to be an account of a recent garden party at Jesus, which had made the Senior Tutor of that college rabid with fury.

The account was sheer burlesque, and written without the slightest knowledge of any of the personages mentioned, but the Senior Tutor resented it so strongly that he insisted on *The Tatler* being suppressed, its printer 'discommoned', or forbidden to carry on business in Cambridge, and Frith himself being sent down for a term.

So although I was not personally involved, it seemed certain that 'Turned Tables' had perished prematurely in the collapse.

However, when I came down for the first part of the Long Vacation, I showed the opening chapters to my father and mother. My mother—as mothers always do in such cases—thought it quite wonderful, and my father, from whom I had rather expected the sermon on wasting my time which I knew I deserved, surprised me by offering if I finished the story to get it published at his own expense.

I was to go up again to read for a month in the Long, and when I did so in July 1877, I spent most of the time which was not devoted to reading law books in re-writing 'Turned Tables', for which I had not yet thought of *Vice Versâ* as a title.

It so happened that a rowing eight composed of Oxford scouts came over to row a crew of Cambridge gyps, and the name of the Oxford stroke was Bultitude.

I have always found, as I daresay most authors have



found, that a really appropriate surname helps enormously towards visualizing a character, and Bultitude struck me at once as suggesting just the type I had in mind.

So I wrote several chapters with much enjoyment—until, for the second time and for infinitely sadder reasons, the story was laid aside, and I no longer had any heart to take it up again.

On Sunday morning, the 5th of August 1877, I got out of bed and went into my sitting-room on the chance that there might be the usual letter from my mother.

I had always heard from her on Sunday and answered her letter the same morning.

This time there was no letter, and I was vaguely uneasy, because I knew she had been ill—how seriously I had not realized—just before I had gone down after the summer term. But I remembered that I had had a letter from her only a day or two before, that she was now in Scotland with my father and sister, and that she had apparently quite recovered—no doubt she had not found time to write again as yet, or I should hear by the first post on Monday. There was no real reason to be anxious I decided.

An hour or two later the head porter brought me up a telegram. It had been sent from Glasgow that morning, and told me that my mother was dangerously ill and I must be prepared for the worst. And late that evening I had another telegram telling me that all was over, and they were bringing her home the next day.

I went home the next morning; my two brothers had been recalled from Devonshire, where they had just begun their holiday, and I found them at Phillimore Gardens on my arrival. That night my father and sister returned, and we saw my mother's coffin carried into the house they had left so hopefully only three days before.

What her death meant to us all—and especially to my poor father—I shall not try to put into words. It seemed incredible that she should be dead, impossible to imagine what our life would be without her. We had taken it for granted that her gentle presence, with the loving sympathy and interest in all our doings which had never failed us once since our earliest days, would remain with us for many years to come. And now, almost without warning, she had been taken from us, and our home was left desolate for ever.

I did not go back to Cambridge for the rest of the Long Vacation after her funeral, but went with my father and brothers and sister to Barmouth for the first holiday—if it could be called one—that we had ever taken together without our mother, and an unspeakably miserable holiday it was for us all.

I was thankful indeed when October came and I had to return to the Hall. As for my literary aspirations, they were at an end, or so I thought then. I had no heart for any work of a would-be humorous nature, and I put away as much as I had written of 'Turned Tables' without any intention of going on with it. My mother was no longer there to encourage me by predicting success, and any belief in myself as an author seemed to have died with her.

Still I must have retained some idea of taking up the story again, or I should have destroyed it instead of merely laying it aside as I did. But it was over three years before I looked at my half-written story again.

The next year passed pleasantly enough, though I have no very clear recollections of most of it. Some other Hall men and I started a Debating Club, which we called 'The Black and White', and which met in each other's rooms. It was intended to deal with legal questions only, till we found that the members' knowledge of law was not

profound enough for technical discussions, whereupon we fell back on the stock subjects, such as Charles the First's execution and Elizabeth's treatment of Mary Queen of Scots. I remember one debate on whether modern inventions were a curse or a blessing, during which a rather stodgy and matter-of-fact member electrified us by a passionate and eloquent protest against machinery. We had none of us thought he had it in him—and he hadn't, until he got it all out of Mallock's *New Republic*.

None of us was in any way a 'blood', though all were rowing men, so it was a surprise to me to find, years afterwards, that 'The Black and White' had become an extremely exclusive affair, to which I should say most of the original founders would have stood a poor chance of being elected.

During the summer term of 1878 the urge to write came upon me once more. I had been drawing a burlesque picture of a Roman Consul entering the City in triumph, when it occurred to me that it might be easier to describe it in words, and I thought of Duilius and the flute-player that was assigned to him as a reward for his victory.

As soon as I began I found that I had a command of words and a joy in constructing serio-comic phrases that had never been mine till then, and I finished the story, which I called 'Accompanied on the Flute', and sent it to H. J. Byron, the editor of *Mirth*, a new humorous magazine, which had made its first monthly appearance that spring.

I had no acknowledgement of it from the editor, and, assuming that it had not been considered worthy of one, thought no more of it, until one day after I had gone down for the Long Vacation, when, finding myself near the office of *Mirth* in the Strand, I went to look at the exterior, for I should not have had the courage to go in and inquire the fate of my story. There was a placard in the window announcing the contents of the number for that

month, and among them I read the title 'Accompanied on the Flute'.

I went in and bought a copy, still unable to believe there was no mistake, and crossed Waterloo Bridge and walked I don't remember where, treading on air and reading my story all the way. It was printed exactly as I had written it, with only one slight error, and that was in the *nom de guerre* with which it was signed.

I had given the initial of my Christian name, Thomas, and my second name Anstey, but the compositor had changed the T into an F. So thereafter I stuck to the F, though I have no idea what Christian name it represents. Some journalists occasionally refer to me as 'Mr. Frank' or 'Fred' Anstey—but though they may know best, I don't think that I *can* be a Frederick. Possibly Francis, but I shall never know now and after all F is quite a respectable initial, so I am content to leave it at that.

In the following July I went up to the Hall to do a month's reading, and in my spare time wrote 'The Return of Agamemnon', an irreverent burlesque story founded on the tragedy by Aeschylus. This also, encouraged by the acceptance of my previous effort, I sent to the editor of *Mirth*.

My father and sister and brothers were at Dinan in Brittany, where I joined them for a fortnight or so in September. On our return, after landing at Southampton from St. Malo, I saw the current number of *Mirth* on a railway bookstall, and found that it contained 'The Return of Agamemnon', which, as I had again had no acknowledgement from the editor, was an encouraging surprise.

My father, who by then had returned to very nearly his normal self, was rather pleased than otherwise by these first appearances of mine in a real periodical. But neither he nor I regarded them as indications that I had

any vocation for authorship. After waiting a little time and hearing nothing from H. J. Byron, I wrote to him to say that I expected some remuneration for the two stories.

The reply was a short and formal intimation that the editor had nothing to do with the payment of contributors, and that I had better apply to the publishers, which I did after my return to Cambridge. This time I received an invitation to a meeting of creditors in bankruptcy, with a form for filling up the amount of my claim. Having no notion of how this should be estimated, I put it at the not too exorbitant amount of two guineas, and a little later was rewarded by a document empowering me to come up to the office and draw the sum of seven and sixpence by two monthly instalments.

And as the return fare from Cambridge considerably exceeded that sum, I left it in the hands of the receiver. So it will be seen that my first experiences as an author hardly encouraged me to look upon writing as a means of earning a livelihood.

While at home that September I was touched by a quite unexpected act on my father's part. I had happened to see a recently published edition of *Old Christmas* and *Bracebridge Hall* with illustrations by Randolph Caldecott, and had told my father how charming they were. The next evening he brought the two volumes home for me, and I have them still with my name in his handwriting on the fly-leaves.

It made our relations more affectionate than they had been since my mother's death, or, I am afraid, than they were ever to be in future.

I went up to Cambridge that October, determined to work hard and get the First in the Law Tripos that my coach expected for me.

As it was my last term I had to turn out of the pleasant attic rooms in college which had been mine for nearly

three years and go into lodgings. These were in St. Mary's passage, which was so narrow and dark that my sitting-room window had a reflector above it like some offices in the City.

However, the rooms were comfortable enough and the landlady pleasant, and anyway it was only for a term. I went through my text-books and lecture notes, and felt that I knew my subjects well enough to afford to indulge in just one last literary orgy. So I wrote a comic story, which I called 'The Wraith of Barnjum' and sent it to the editor of *Temple Bar*, then one of the leading magazines.

It did not take me long to write this story, but, as the Tripos drew nearer and nearer, I became more and more uncomfortably aware that I ought never to have allowed anything whatever to interfere with my work. I had never read very intelligently, and I found that I did not recollect what I had read as clearly as I had supposed. I sat up late reading feverishly, and with a nightmare sense that, whatever subject I was working at, there was another that needed my attention more urgently still.

As an after effect of this I used for many years to dream at intervals that I was in for an important examination and that there was one subject which I had entirely forgotten.

It was a bitter cold December that year; there was ice every morning on my water-jug, and my cold tub, the supply of hot water being limited at my lodgings, left me not invigorated but shivering for hours afterwards.

So that, in a great measure through my own folly, when the Tripos was actually upon me I was by no means as prepared as I might and ought to have been. However, for the first four days I felt that though I had not distinguished myself in any one of the papers, I had not done absolutely badly.

A sensible person would have shut up his books from the moment the Tripos began and taken any and every

opportunity of diverting his thoughts from the subject except while in the examination hall. But I was not sensible; I sat up later than ever cramming for the next day's papers, and trying desperately to repair the breaches in my crumbling memory—with the inevitable result of getting hopelessly muddled.

On the fifth day the subject was Constitutional History, at which I had been supposed to be fairly safe, and, after going through the examination questions, I discovered that my mind was an utter blank as to every one of them.

I sat staring at the paper for some time, hoping that something of what I thought I knew would come back, but nothing did. I am not sure, but I think I made some sort of attempt to answer one of the questions. And then, before I had been in the hall half an hour, I took what was practically a blank page up to the examiner, and left.

I returned to my rooms, changed my cap and gown for a hat, and went out again in utter despair. I knew that whatever chance I might have had was lost now. I had failed; all the money spent on my Cambridge education had been thrown away, and I had no one to blame but myself.

I wandered out of Cambridge, with a numbed feeling that I could never return, never face my friends, still less my father, after so disgraceful a fall as this.

Some time before I had re-read *Pendennis*, but it had never seemed possible then that his fate could ever be mine. I do not suppose, however, that any recollection of this embittered my thoughts now—if anything could have added to their bitterness.

But I was more fortunate, little as I deserved to be, than Arthur Pendennis. I met a friend, the vicar of a village some miles out of Cambridge, who, after hearing my story, encouraged me to return and go in for the remaining papers as though nothing had happened. He gave me luncheon, and drove me back himself in time

for that afternoon's paper. Then he went to see Ben Latham on my account. Dear old Ben was so concerned that he took the trouble to find out from the examiners whether my fears were well-founded or not, and at the same time, thinking that I was in for a nervous breakdown, he wrote to my father.

But the crisis had passed for me; I was, curiously enough, quite composed during that afternoon and did a tolerably good paper, and by the evening I heard from Ben that, notwithstanding my fiasco in Constitutional History, I had done well enough already to be safe from a plough—which was so immense a relief that I went through the remaining day's examinations more to my own satisfaction.

I wrote of course to my kind and wise friend, the vicar, to express my gratitude so far as any words could do so, and I hoped to meet him again some day, and tell him what his goodness had done for me and how I should always remember it.

But that was never to be—for within a year I had the shock of seeing an announcement in the paper that he had died after a very short illness.

My father and my brother Leonard came up to Cambridge the next day, but by that time I was nearly my usual self, and Leonard and I had an afternoon's skating on the ice. I think Ben must have cautioned my father in some way, for he asked me no questions, and said very little about the Tripos at the time.

I returned with them, and a few days before Christmas the Tripos list was published, and I was head of the Third Class. I might, I think, have got a Second but for the collapse in Constitutional History, but I never stood a chance of a First.

I had miraculously escaped downright disgrace, but I felt that I was none the less a failure. Which, indeed, was my father's feeling a little later.



*Reading for the Bar. 'Vice Versâ'*  
*written and accepted*

I CAME back to live at home in a thoroughly subdued and humble spirit, for previously, at times when my inferiority complex was not in the ascendant, I had had a fairly good conceit of myself.

That was gone, and I made up my mind that henceforth there should be no philandering with the Comic Muse. All my time and thoughts should be given to preparing myself for work at the Bar, which seemed to be the only career open to me, and which I hoped I might learn to love in time. Writing was clearly a blind alley, for my last illicit effort had apparently left the editor unimpressed.

So at the beginning of the January Law term I read as pupil with Alfred Bailey, a conveyancer in good practice whose chambers were in Old Square, Lincoln's Inn, while I worked hard at home for the examinations for my call to the Bar.

Alfred Bailey was a genial and charming man, with a pleasant sense of humour; the wills and settlements that came into his chambers for drafting concerned the estates of some of the wealthiest titled families, so that I gained some valuable experience—for a barrister—in the method of dealing with successions to vast properties, and did not find life in chambers so irksome as I expected.

But I soon found that the greater part of conveyancing consisted, for me at all events, in copying out precedents from Davidson, and adapting the vital parts to the particular circumstances in the briefs, and my efforts in that direction generally met with wholesale alterations when I submitted them to Bailey.

And then, some two months after I had sent my last story to *Temple Bar* from Cambridge, a packet was delivered to me by post, and I knew, without feeling equal to opening it, that it contained my manuscript—some of it was actually recognizable under the covering. When I did open it I found that I had not been mistaken as to that, but inside the manuscript was a proof of 'The Wraith of Barnjum', with a kindly note from the editor. So, I thought, I was not quite such a hopeless failure after all.

The story appeared in *Temple Bar* for the following month, and I received a cheque for £4 10s., which was at least an advance on an invitation to draw seven and sixpence in two instalments.

The effect of this small success was naturally to revive my literary ambition.

I still worked hard both at chambers and at home, but on Sundays and holidays I gave a good deal of my time to my favourite pursuit. I wrote two more short stories, which I sent to the editor of *Temple Bar*, and which were both declined with a printed form of polite refusal.

This, I may say, was entirely justified, for so far as I can remember, though I think the stories had a certain originality, their humour was too laboured to render them acceptable by any editor.

It seemed useless to try them elsewhere, so I burnt them and came back to my former conclusion that there was no future for me in authorship.

Walter Frith, with whom I had kept up the friendship begun at the Hall, was also reading in chambers for the Bar, and, like myself, more attracted by Literature. We were in the habit after work was done of walking home together, or for various expeditions, and of submitting our respective literary efforts to one another.

I had severely abstained from such attempts until an afternoon in the summer of 1880, when we had gone to

the Zoo together and happened to enter the Snake House at feeding time; then I gave way to temptation once more and wrote a descriptive article, which I sent to *Time*, a new magazine edited by Edmund Yates.

There was another afternoon in July, when Frith and I had gone to the Alexandra Palace, and walking back through Highgate stopped to call on Mrs. Stone, the mother of Marcus Stone, the Royal Academician. Outside her cottage was a carriage and pair, and inside we found a sister of Frith with her two children, a boy and a girl, the latter at the delightful age of between seven and eight. We were driven back to town in the carriage, and the little girl was so charming that I felt a strong impulse to write a story about her, if I could only hit upon an idea for one. And presently I did, called it 'A Nursery Lamia' (a title which I afterwards changed to 'The Sugar Prince') and sent it to *The Graphic*.

I may add that the same child became my heroine in *Vice Versâ*, though I doubt if she has ever suspected it, and that only a few months ago I met an equally charming married daughter of hers, and over forty years dropped out of my life for the moment.

To my surprise both article and story were accepted, and I began to think that perhaps after all I *could* write.

In August of that year I travelled in Normandy with George Millar and W. D. Caröe, now the distinguished architect, and during the return journey to Waterloo I suddenly remembered my abandoned school story, and wondered whether it would be worth while to go on with it.

I found the opening chapters, which I had never cared to look at since my mother's death, put away in a drawer, and on re-reading them, it seemed to me that there was something in the idea, if I could only see my way to a suitable ending—which as yet I had not. And after a time I saw what I thought might be an effective conclusion, and would at least be amusing to attempt.

I had arranged to read for a year with Ingle Joyce—afterwards one of the Judges in Chancery—but his chambers would not be open just yet so that I had some spare time for the experiment. I began with Mr. Bultitude's escape from school, and wrote on to the finish with increasing enjoyment. Then I thought of *Vice Versâ* as a better title than *Turned Tables*, and re-writing the story from the beginning was only a question of time.

Not that I had much time to give to it, for by then I had begun my year with Ingle Joyce, and at home I had to read steadily for my Call examination.

I found work with Joyce stimulating and interesting. Statements of claim and petitions, if not exciting, were at all events more human than conveyancing forms, and there were cases for opinion which required looking up decisions in Law Reports, and gave one a certain satisfaction in finding one that was to the point.

Joyce always went carefully through each case with the pupil to whom the papers had been given, and I rather enjoyed having to go in and give reasons for my opinions. His manner was brusque and a trifle alarming at first, but I soon got used to that. I worked hard while I was in those chambers in Stone Buildings, and learned at least to state a case concisely and accurately, which was valuable to me later as a writer. But I certainly did not impress Joyce as a person who was at all likely to have a brilliant career at the Bar. George Millar, who was also reading with him, did, and so did Robert Parker, afterwards Lord Parker of Waddington, and T. R. Hughes, now Sir Thomas Hughes of the Chancery Bar.

Another promising man was Arthur Pearson, the elder son of a leading Q.C. Arthur Pearson had been at the Hall with me, but I only knew him by sight there, and he had taken his degree a year before I did. We became close friends in Joyce's Chambers, however, and remained so until his premature death.

Hitherto I had only written *Vice Versâ* on Sundays, but during the Christmas vacation I worked at it for hours every day and night, until the pile of manuscript chapters began to look encouragingly like a real book, and I felt more intensely happy, even if guilty, with each page.

By the spring it was practically finished, but I kept it for revision until the autumn of 1881, when I was again reading in Alfred Bailey's chambers for six months. As the *Graphic* had printed my last story I decided to send *Vice Versâ* there as a possible serial.

A day or two after I found my manuscript back on my table in Bailey's pupil room, with a curt note from the editor to the effect that his serials were arranged for years in advance, and that I should have known better than to harass a busy man by inflicting on him what he referred to as 'a bulky mass of manuscript'.

This was not encouraging, but at least there was the consolation of inferring that he had probably not troubled to read a line of the book. There was still the editor and publisher of *Temple Bar*—I would try *him*. So I packed up 'the bulky mass' once more and sent it to George Bentley. I think I had a formal acknowledgement of its receipt, and after that, I heard no more for four months, though there was always the sustaining thought that a cordial acceptance might arrive at any moment.

In 1881 I passed my examination without difficulty or distinction, and was called to the Bar by the Benchers of my Inn, the Middle Temple, after which I spent a few months in sitting in the Appeal, Chancery, and Common Law Courts, and familiarizing myself with their methods of procedure.

In the two first divisions there was seldom anything to lighten the dullness of the proceedings, but I remember being in old Vice-Chancellor Bacon's stuffy little court opposite Lincoln's Inn Gate, when a case was being heard in which the owner of fishing rights was claiming damages

from a paper-making company for polluting the river and killing the fish by discharging noxious fluids into the stream. The defence was that there were settling-tanks which prevented anything of a noxious kind from reaching the river, and a young and rather nervous Junior for the paper company had called one of their employees to prove this. 'And now,' he said to the witness, 'what would you say is the size of one of these tanks?'

The witness, a rough burly sort of person, looked round the court with the frankest contempt, and then replied: 'Well, I should say it was about three times the size o' this 'ere 'ole.'

Which, as Bacon could be a terror when roused, made the Junior very uncomfortable for the moment. But the Vice-Chancellor reassured him by remarking, 'I quite agree with the witness, it *is* a hole, and it is a disgrace that Her Majesty's Judges should be required to sit in it!'

There was amusement at times to be found in Vice-Chancellor Malin's court, where the leader, Glasse, Q.C., so dominated the Bench that Malins would protest almost in tears against his rudeness. In private life I believe they were the greatest of friends. Malins would frequently enter into conversation with a witness whose name happened to strike him as familiar. 'Are you any relation to Henry Blank of Dash Manor?' he would ask. 'His son, my lord.' 'Why I used to know him well, and how is he now?' 'Dead, my lord.' 'Dear me, I'm sorry to hear that. Hadn't you an Aunt Sarah who lived at (wherever it was)? I thought so. I've often met her—is she alive still?' And so on for some time, until Glasse would make some caustic remark which put an effectual stop to these social reminiscences.

However, Malins must have had a sense of humour if his often quoted remark when an aggrieved litigant threw an egg at him that 'it must have been intended for my

brother Bacon' was really made by him, as there seems no reason to doubt.

The Common Law Courts, then still at Westminster Hall, provided far more interest and amusement than those at Lincoln's Inn, and I shall never forget a devastating reply by a witness in a case that was being tried in, I think, the Court of King's Bench (they were not styled divisions in those days). A man called Baum, who had been lessee of Cremorne, had been indicted with others for conspiracy, and was conducting his own defence with considerable ability. Among the witnesses he called to speak for his character was a dapper little Jewish gentleman with a resplendent top hat and a flower in his button-hole, who stepped briskly into the box.

'Your name is Benjamin Isaacs' (or whatever it was), 'is it not?' asked Baum.

'It ish,' said Mr. Isaacs.

'I have been connected with you in various business transactions, have I not?'

'You 'ave.'

'Well,' proceeded Baum confidently, 'in all those business transactions have I not invariably conducted myself with the honesty and integrity of an English gentleman?'

Mr. Isaacs appeared to think for a moment, after which he replied calmly: 'In no shingle inshtance.'

There was a roar of laughter, in which the Judge (who I think was Lord Justice Cockburn) joined, and Baum intimated that he had nothing more to ask that witness. But Baum was obviously innocent, and was acquitted.

Listening to cases in court was a useful object-lesson in the arts of examining in chief and cross-examining, but somehow I never could quite picture myself putting these lessons into practice.

I was not a regular churchgoer, but when my sister was away I occasionally accompanied my father to St. Paul's,

Onslow Square, on Sunday mornings, or at least I did until a certain day when the sermon was delivered by a new and very young curate. His text was taken, as I have only just discovered in Cruden's *Concordance*, from Hosea, and was 'Ephraim is a cake not turned', and the curate began by an elaborate description of how cakes were baked in the East. It seemed that you took a flat stone, lighted a fire underneath it, and then put a cake of dough on the stone and waited till the underside of the cake was properly done, after which you turned it over till the other side was equally brown.

He explained that the cake was a type of the soul, and the turning a symbol of conversion, which similitudes he elaborated at great length.

And then came his peroration. With tears in his voice he finished in these exact words: 'But oh, my beloved brothers and sisters, bad as it is—and how woefully, infinitely bad my poor erring human tongue cannot attempt to tell—to be a cake not turned, it is better—ah, how *much* better!—than not to be a cake *at all*!'

I never had perfect control over my risible muscles, and I regret to say that I laughed quite audibly. So I thought it advisable not to attend service at St. Paul's in future.

One Sunday evening I went to another church with my father. It was in Hammersmith Road near what is now St. Paul's School, and although the service was that of the Established Church, the hymns were certainly not *Ancient and Modern*. I remember two verses from one of them, which were as follows:

(1)

*There's a barp above in that Happy Land,  
A barp that is tuned for Me!  
And on it I'll laud  
My Saviour and Gawd,  
On that barp that is tuned for Me.*



(2)

*There's a Song above in that Happy Land,  
A song that's composed for Me!  
And in it I'll jine  
With the choir divine  
In the Song that's composed for Me.*

As we were walking home afterwards I said to my father, 'That was a very remarkable hymn, that last one they sang.'

He agreed that it was remarkable.

'I've thought of an additional verse for it,' I told him.

'Have you?' he said a little suspiciously, for he knew my habit of mind was not devotional. 'And what is it, my boy?'

'Well,' I said, 'it's this':

*There's a coat above in that Happy Land,  
A coat that is made for Me!  
It is striped blue and black,  
And it's tight in the back,  
But still it was MADE for Me.*

I think he gave me some kind of reproof for my irreverence, but I could see that he was not nearly so shocked by it as he affected to be.

Two months had passed since I had dispatched *Vice Versâ* to the editor of *Temple Bar*, and I thought it could not be long before I had news. It was not—for on the 23rd of February I found the following letter:

Manuscript Room.

8 New Burlington Street,  
London, W.

Feb. 22, '82.

Dear Sir,

We are sorry, after a careful consideration, to be unable to make proposals to you for the publication of 'Vice-Versa'.

We have come somewhat reluctantly to this decision as there is considerable humour in the work, but the story itself is not one to find favour with grown-up people so much as with younger readers.

The story has been in our hands, perhaps rather longer than it should have been, but this has arisen from the wish not to decline the story too hurriedly.

Should you at a future time be writing either a more developed story in novel form, or short magazine papers, we shall always be ready to give them our attention.

We will return the MS. on receiving your instructions.

We remain, dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

R. BENTLEY & SON.

This letter, courteously as it was expressed, seemed to me to deal a death-blow to any hopes I had had of becoming an author, for it showed that I had been utterly mistaken in supposing *Vice Versâ* to be suitable for adult reading instead of being only adapted to the intelligence of children—a clear proof that I did not know my job. Nor was I much encouraged by the promise to consider ‘a more developed story in novel form’, which I took to mean that *Vice Versâ* was a very immature performance, and I had certainly thought it was better than that.

But it did not occur to me to question the verdict. After two rebuffs, both from persons who had accepted previous work of mine, I thought I should only be courting more disappointment by offering *Vice Versâ* to any other firms. Besides, whom should I try? The publishers of *Mirth* had long since gone into bankruptcy: it would be hopeless to approach any more of the leading firms, and I had no particular desire to have my book brought out by one that was second-rate.

It seemed to me that the wisest thing to do was to accept the fact that I had failed, put my unfortunate manuscript away, and try to forget that I had ever been such a fool as to waste time and hope on it.

Henceforth I must stick to my legitimate profession and trust for better luck in that, and accordingly I arranged to set up in chambers with George Millar and T. R. Hughes in New Square, Lincoln's Inn.

Fortunately for me, however, I happened to meet Walter Frith a few days after I received the letter from Bentley's, and as we were in the habit of comparing notes on our literary adventures, I told him of the failure of my story, and that I did not feel inclined to make any further attempts to find a publisher for it.

He asked me to let him see the manuscript, and very kindly offered, if he thought favourably of it, to show it to James Payn, who was an old friend of his father's, and, besides being a most popular novelist, was the reader for Messrs. Smith and Elder.

Naturally I accepted this offer with gratitude, though without any hope of a better result than previously, for by this time I had lost all belief in my unfortunate story.

Frith wrote to say that he liked it, and had left the manuscript in Payn's hands, and for some days I heard no more, though I dined one evening at the Friths' house, and saw a comedietta by Walter Frith performed afterwards in the drawing-room, James Payn being one of the guests.

Knowing that he was the arbiter of *Vice Versâ's* fate, I looked at him with interest and some apprehension. He was tall, thin, and rather angular, he had a sharp high voice, there was a kindly twinkle behind his spectacles, and he was a brilliant and amusing raconteur. He laughed heartily throughout the dramatic performance, and was evidently of a genial disposition.

But when I was introduced to him, he said nothing

about my story; to be sure, he might not have read it yet; on the other hand, he might have done so, and been naturally unwilling to express an adverse opinion of it to me in public. On the whole I saw no reason for being hopeful.

A little later Walter Frith sent me a cryptic note he had just received from Payn, which was in these words: 'Dear Walter, Tell me—did *you* write 'Vice Versa'? Yes or no.'

This did not strike me as at all encouraging. It seemed evident that Payn thought Frith's statement that the author was a friend of his a mere device to conceal his own identity. So if the story were Frith's, Payn might, as an old family friend, stretch a point in its favour. When he learnt that it was not, he might take a less favourable view of it.

Walter Frith convinced him that I was really the author and a little later that spring on arriving at Alfred Bailey's Chambers, which he allowed me to use until my new quarters were ready for occupation, I found on my table the following letter:

15 Waterloo Place,  
London, S.W.  
March 27th 1882.

Sir,

We have given our best attention to the manuscript 'Vice Versâ, or the Garuda Stone', which you have been so good as to forward to us for consideration.

It is a bright and humorous little story. Its brevity is, of course, a necessity, but commercially, as you will easily understand, this is a great disadvantage.

If it takes the fancy of the public, as in our opinion it deserves to do, it may have a considerable sale; but it will be a case of hit or miss with it.

Under ordinary circumstances we should not undertake the publication of so slight a story at all, but we

are willing to make 'Vice Versâ, or the Garuda Stone' an exception.

We will give you twenty-five pounds (£25.0.0.) for the copyright of the book, at home and abroad, including the American rights, and twenty-five pounds (£25.0.0.) more in case of our printing a second edition.

We are, Sir,

Yours faithfully,

SMITH, ELDER & Co.

## VI

### *'Vice Versâ'*

**S**UPPOSING a young author in whom I was interested had been offered similar terms nowadays and had consulted me as to whether he should accept them or not—how should I advise him?

In the first place I should certainly warn him against parting with his copyright for any consideration whatever. In the second, I should advise him to ask for a royalty on the sales, to accept a small percentage on the first edition, and a higher one on any subsequent editions. I should also recommend him to reserve dramatic, broadcasting, and cinema rights, and, on general principles, to become a member of the Society of Authors and to sign no agreement without having first submitted it to their Secretary.

But at that time I knew no one who could advise me; I think Sir Walter Besant had already founded the Society of Authors, but if so I was unaware of it, and I was in the blindest ignorance of royalties and percentages, or the terms that an untried author might hope to obtain.

So that it never occurred to me for a moment either to decline this offer, or to suggest terms that were rather more favourable. And naturally enough, for if I had ever had any great belief in my story, the fact that it had been twice declined and once described as unsuitable for any readers of mature years had effectually shaken my confidence. It seemed miraculous to me that a firm of Messrs. Smith & Elder's high standing—a firm that had published works by Thackeray, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, Trollope, and Meredith—should think mine worth undertaking on any terms.

If I were mad enough to decline this offer, what

remained but to hawk my manuscript about with firms of a lower grade, who were not at all likely to see anything in it?

To me, as to most young authors, the one important point was to have my book published. I did not consider the terms precisely lavish, though fifty pounds, or even twenty-five, was a far larger sum than I had as yet earned, but the money question was the last I considered.

I accepted Messrs. Smith & Elder's offer at once, without consulting any one, and my instinct did not mislead me, for I have never made a wiser decision in my life.

I did not know then that George Smith was, as he stated much later in his reminiscences, very far from sharing James Payn's enthusiasm for the book, and it was not till nearly thirty years later that I learnt from Mrs. Payn that it would only have been published on the terms originally offered.

If it had been returned on my hands I might, though I doubt it, have offered it to other firms, and had to wait months, or more probably years, before I found one with sufficient faith to make me an offer for it. That offer might or might not have been more to my advantage than was Messrs. Smith & Elder's; it would certainly not have come from a house in anything approaching their position.

The book would have appeared without any preliminary flourish of trumpets; it would have received a few brief and belated notices—probably to the effect that the story would have been more acceptable if it had been less fantastically impossible—and after that it would have been read by few and promptly forgotten, as has been the fate of many books quite as deserving of remembrance.

That this was not the fate of *Vice Versâ* was, as will be seen, entirely owing to my acceptance of the offer from a firm which had James Payn as its reader and adviser.

A day or two later I had a note from James Payn, asking me to call at Waterloo Place. I found him in a top

room, with a balustraded parapet outside the low windows above Smith & Elder's offices, engaged on the serial he was writing. He received me most cordially, and told me at once that he considered *Vice Versâ* a remarkable book and anticipated a great success for it. I told him that I had been called to the Bar, but felt no vocation for it, that I would rather take up writing instead if there was any prospect of my being able to earn a living by it. I also told him what my father's business was, and how he would naturally object to my throwing up a profession after he had spent so much on my education and training for it.

James Payn said that, as a rule, he would advise no young man to take up Literature as a profession when he already had another open to him, but, in my own case, he was inclined to think I could safely take the risk. He asked to see any other work I might have in hand before giving a more definite opinion. Then he took me downstairs and introduced me to George Smith, who was genial and pleasant, though I could see even then that he was by no means optimistic as to the future of *Vice Versâ*.

Nevertheless I left Waterloo Place feeling, for the very first time, that my story might have qualities I had been far from suspecting.

I took James Payn some short stories I had in manuscript. 'The Black Poodle', 'A Farewell Appearance', and 'The Curse of the Catafalques', and after reading them he said he had no further hesitation in advising me to leave the Bar and 'commence author'. Either at my suggestion or his own, he wrote to my father to this effect. He also sent the two first stories to Mr. C. D. Longman, who was about to start *Longman's Magazine*, and 'The Curse of the Catafalques' to Mr. Leslie Stephen, who was then editing *The Cornhill Magazine*.

Longman accepted both stories, but Leslie Stephen



did not care for ‘The Curse’ and only took it because Payn had so warmly recommended it.

I had already told my father of my determination to give up the Bar and the chambers in Carey Street which I was sharing with George Millar and T. R. Hughes. He took it much better than I expected, although he did not conceal his opinion that I was abandoning the bone for the shadow.

But, in my case, the bone was as yet no more tangible than the shadow, as he probably realized, and when I showed him Payn’s letter it went a good way towards reconciling him to my decision.

At Whitsuntide Millar, Hughes, Arthur Pearson, Hugh Boyd and I rowed down from Oxford to Twickenham in a four-oar, taking three and a half days over it, and putting up at Shillingford, Pangbourne, and the Bells of Ousely.

It was lovely weather, and I felt perfectly happy at having escaped, as I thought for ever, from the uncongenial occupation of waiting for briefs which I was not particularly anxious to get. But when I got home late on the night of the last day of our trip I found a long blue document awaiting me; it had been forwarded from chambers, and was a case to advise upon from the London agents of a solicitor at Hull. It appeared that he had been at King’s College School with me, and after seeing my name among those recently called to the Bar, had instructed his agents to send me the case. I do not know—as we were on different sides of the school, and I could not remember having come across him—how I could have impressed him with such respect for my legal knowledge, but I wished very heartily that I had given him any other impression.

For what to any other young barrister would have been an unhopèd-for stroke of luck meant for me that the

shackles from which I had hoped I had freed myself were on me again, and faster than before.

Naturally my father and all my family urged me not to be such a fool as to throw away a certainty, when it was still doubtful whether I had any literary future or not. I saw myself that that was a reasonable view, and yet—I had already planned out the scenario of a novel, and I knew that I could never write it in chambers with constant interruptions from my companions' clients (for both Millar and Hughes already had clients) and possibly one or two from my own.

But for a time I hesitated; it did not seem possible to return that brief. Fortunately I was just then staying with Millar at Bethnal House, Bethnal Green, where his father, Dr. Millar, was the superintendent of a large lunatic asylum.

I told Millar how I felt about it, and he, knowing me well enough to be sure that I had not the qualifications for success at the Bar, was strongly in favour of my persisting in my secession from it.

So, fortified by his opinion, I wrote to my old school-fellow and told him that I had decided not to practise at the Bar. After which for the next few days my home life was somewhat trying, especially as I could not help knowing that all our relations and friends were being informed of my folly, and that nothing could justify it but an absolutely miraculous success, which no sane author could expect for a first book.

Still, as the days went on, I began to have more confidence. For James Payn had been showing early proofs of *Vice Versâ* to various influential persons—to Frederick Lehmann (the father of Rudy Lehmann, whom I had only known slightly at Cambridge), to Wilkie Collins, Edmund Yates, the editor of *The World*, and Andrew Lang.

And from their letters and what Payn told me, I knew

that they thought well of the story. It is true that James Payn sent an urgent message asking me to call and remove a doubt he had, and when I went I found that Frederick Lehmann had told him he had read a story not long ago with exactly the same plot and incidents. I was alarmed myself, for I could not imagine how I could have been anticipated. But I soon found that the story in question was only my own ‘Turned Tables’, Rudy having brought home the numbers of *The Cambridge Tatler* which contained it. So all was well.

I was invited to an afternoon party at the Lehmanns’ house in Berkeley Square, where I found that all the family had read part of *Vice Versâ* in proof, and were looking forward to its publication, which helped to encourage me.

But nothing could have prepared me for so immediate and striking a success as *Vice Versâ* obtained, entirely owing to James Payn’s generous advocacy.

On the very morning it appeared there was a long article in the *Daily News*—not a notice, but a leader—with enthusiastic praises of *Vice Versâ*, and in the *Saturday Review* of the same week an equally laudatory notice of it, and the *Saturday*’s verdict in those days carried enormous weight.

Both articles were written by Andrew Lang, whom as yet I had never met, though I was shortly to find him the most delightful of friends.

This note of eulogy once struck, all the other papers joined in with scarcely a dissentient note. *Vice Versâ* instantly became a ‘best seller’—the kind of book it does not do not to have read. Edition followed edition rapidly, and I became for the time at all events famous.

I was immensely, unspeakably relieved. I had ‘made good’ beyond my wildest dreams; all the disapproving voices of the past few weeks were effectually silenced. I was free to use what talent I had in my own way. But

I was a little alarmed as well. These violent delights were apt to have violent ends, and I had an intuition that I had aroused expectations which I could not hope to fulfil.

Nor did I fulfil them. There is a freshness about a first book that none but a writer of genius can ever recover in his later work. Moreover, I had one other advantage in *Vice Versâ* which could never be repeated. When the working out of the main idea had once been decided on, I had nothing to invent—I had merely to remember—my characters, incidents, and background only needed selection and arrangement.

Henceforth, as I realized, I should have to make my bricks with straw of my own imagination, which would not be so easy a business.

After the chorus of praises of *Vice Versâ* had died away, there were signs of a reaction in the Press, paragraphs pointing out that the author's knowledge of life was derived rather from books than actual experience (which was true enough), that the book had been absurdly over-rated, in which I quite agreed, or predicting that I had gone up like a rocket and would come down like the stick.

I remember a picturesque statement, too, that my father, whose calling was of course given, had been at school with Lord Roberts, and had consulted him as to my literary future. The real facts being that Lord Roberts was an old customer of my father's, who had followed his career from a subaltern with the greatest admiration. So, when my book came out, my father had sent out a copy to Lord Roberts in India, and he had sent a very kindly worded acknowledgement, expressing his intention of reading the story as soon as possible. No doubt my father had mentioned this to more than a few, and it had got round to a journalist, who felt that it required these ornamental touches to become of interest to the Public.

There was another little paragraph relating how, when

asked why my handwriting was so illegible, I made the witty reply that 'we authors write badly in order to conceal our worse spelling'. It had been made, but years before I was born, and neither my handwriting nor my orthography was below the average.

And there was an anecdote of my having been introduced to a lady who had told me with effusion how much she had enjoyed my 'Bath Guide'. Which was an obvious invention, for if there were any woman existing who still enjoyed that work she would not have been such a fool as to credit any one of twenty-five with its authorship.

Then I had some abusive letters—anonymous of course. All this was amusing enough, and did not disturb my equanimity in the least; but one day I got a letter forwarded by Messrs. Longmans, which made me distinctly uncomfortable.

It was from a firm of solicitors in Finsbury Circus, asking them for my address. I had an uneasy recollection of certain things in *Vice Versâ*, which, if once identified with the real Crichton House, might quite well strike Grimstone as libellous—and I thought it more than possible that this letter was the first step to an action.

Messrs. Longmans had, of course, declined to give my address, so I wrote to the solicitors and gave it. Their reply was a great relief to my mind; it appeared that a man who had been staying at their clients' hotel in the country somewhere had said that he was the author of *Vice Versâ* and disappeared without paying his bill. They were merely trying to get on his track. I fancy they failed, as I never heard any more of him, but I hope he did me credit at that hotel.

As for Grimstone, I never met or heard from him then or afterwards, but my father came across him the year after *Vice Versâ* was published, and after some allusion to it he said, 'I recognized myself in that book'. To which my father replied that he recognized *himself* too. But

though Grimstone was undoubtedly the original of my schoolmaster, Paul Bultitude was not drawn from my father, or from any one else—he was simply the typical parent as I conceived him.

I had had a more sensationally successful début than the most self-confident young author could ever have imagined, even in his dreams, and yet my chief feeling was, as I have said, of apprehension.

The extravagant praises that had been showered on my first book had by no means convinced me that I was a genius; I knew perfectly well that I was nothing of the kind. And I was not a profound thinker; I had no message to deliver, no theories to propound, no cause to advocate. My only assets were a sense of humour, and some powers of observation and description.

I had won freedom to follow the only pursuit I cared for—but how long would I be able to keep that freedom? So far was I from expecting any continuance of my first success that my real dread was that I might soon find myself unable to make anything by writing that could be called an income.

It was suggested to me, quite seriously, that I should follow up *Vice Versâ* with a story in which a mother should be sent to school in the character of her own daughter, and if I had possessed any knowledge of life at a girls' school, it is quite possible that I should have made a small fortune with my second book, and should have been set down to write fantastic stories of school life for the remainder of my days.

But the suggestion did not appeal to me, and I had already made up my mind that unless I were free to write only on such subjects as interested or amused me enough to make work a pleasure, a literary career would be no more enjoyable than any other.

*Friends and Acquaintances*

THE extravagant success of *Vice Versâ* had brought me into a new and very different world from that in which I had lived till then. I remember Mrs. Fletcher Moulton, the Lord Justice's first wife, telling me that the book was 'a key which had opened all doors to me', and though that was, of course, an over-statement, it certainly procured me the entrée to a great many houses in which I could not have expected to find myself a visitor.

James Payn had impressed on me the necessity of taking every opportunity of gaining experience that came in my way, and I went wherever I was asked.

The difference I found between the dinner- and luncheon-parties I had formerly attended and those in which I was now a guest was in the talk I heard. The conversation was no longer a series of platitudes, but really amusing and interesting, the talk of men and women who had distinguished themselves in Literature and Art, Science and Politics, and the Theatre, and who as a rule took some trouble to be entertaining—people who, but for *Vice Versâ*, would never have been more than names to me.

At the George Smiths' house in Queen's Gate Gardens, for instance, I met and was introduced to such personages as Robert Browning, Professor Huxley, and the author of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. They were all extremely kind and gracious to me, but I have nothing to record except that I had the honour of meeting them occasionally.

Through Andrew Lang I made the acquaintance of W. B. Richmond and his charming wife, and for many years was a frequent guest at Beavor Lodge, their seventeenth-century house in Hammersmith.

There was a delightful informality about their Saturday

parties; a certain number would be asked to dinner, but at the garden-party which preceded it Richmond would add at least as many more guests, so that Mrs. Richmond never knew for how many she would have to provide. Not that that ever disturbed her equanimity; by some miracle of housekeeping, she was always equal to the occasion. The original guests dined in full kit, the rest in morning clothes or tennis flannels, and no dinner-parties could be more thoroughly enjoyable and successful.

At one of them I met 'Dicky' Doyle, not long before his death, and recall him as a calm, benign-looking man with white hair and remarkably blue eyes, who said very little. The William Morrises were often at these parties, as were the Edward Poynters and Burne-Joneses, and Richmond's brother-in-law, William Fothergill Robinson, then a Chancery Q.C., afterwards Vice-Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

He and his family were to become among the closest and most valued of my friends.

And there was Inglis, a younger brother of Richmond, an amiable voluble dilettante, with gifts that might have enabled him to distinguish himself in more than one profession but for his incurable indolence and the fact that he had been left a sum of money by a friend of his father's which made it unnecessary for him to work.

He had indeed been called to the Bar, and for a time was in chambers with William Fothergill Robinson, who told me that a client came to see him one day, and as he was leaving, said to Inglis, 'Oh, by the way, Mr. Richmond, we're sending you a case for opinion—it's a point on a bill of exchange.'

'Rweally?' said Inglis, with his engaging lisp, 'That's verwy nice of you,' and added brightly, 'Tell me—what is a bill of exchange?'

He was honestly anxious to know, but this was not likely to impress any solicitor with confidence, and I fancy



Inglis was as much justified as I was in retiring early from practice.

He was a brilliant scholar, and great things had been expected of him both at Charterhouse and Oxford, but somehow he had never done them, and had settled down into a pleasant good-natured gossip and connoisseur, with a wonderful talent for mimicry.

Inglis would give an imitation, for instance, of an old verger showing tourists round a French cathedral which was so lifelike as to have a touch of genius, and that was only one item in his repertoire.

This and other social qualities made him much in request, and he probably found his life agreeable enough as a rule, though I think there were times when he felt that it was rather a wasted one. I can see him now, a stout short figure, with a twinkle behind his single eye-glass, and a look of an omniscient jackdaw on his round face.

And I see Beavor Lodge as it used to be: the postern door in the old wall by which one entered; the lawn with its trees and the big red Italian oil jars, the low-ceilinged rooms full of quaint and beautiful things, the big studio beyond with one or two of Richmond's portraits, or his big canvas of an audience in a Greek amphitheatre, his statue of a Greek shepherd, and countless designs for his mosaics in St. Paul's. And in garden, rooms, and studio a company of interesting and distinguished men and women, many of the latter remarkably beautiful. And Willie Richmond, fresh-coloured, with auburn hair and slight beard, and laughing blue eyes, vivacious and enthusiastic. And his wife, with her beautiful quietly humorous face, her hair in smooth wings over her temples, the simple rather severe dress that gave her a slightly medieval air. And the children, running about the grounds with Nelson, the handsome and gentle collie, I can see them all with my mind's eye as they were on those happy afternoons.

The last time but one I saw Beavor Lodge was about

five years ago; there were posters on the old brick wall and postern gate advertising it for sale, and the roof of the house had a dilapidated look, and the windows were dim and many of them broken. I found the caretaker and went in; some of the old oil jars still remained by the paths, but the garden was a ruin, and the rooms and studio I once knew so well were bare and dusty. And I realized that of all the friends I had known within those walls only four, or five at most, were still living. Considering that I was even then over seventy, I might have been prepared for this. But somehow I was not.

A few months ago I turned down Beavor Lane again, and house and garden had gone, their site covered by engineering and other works.

Robert Louis Stevenson was an intimate friend of Richmond's who once described to me how they sat up late in the studio telling one another gruesome stories of crime and murder, when suddenly there was a sharp rap on the French window that led to the garden, a bull's-eye lantern was flashed upon them, and a constable entered, having seen a light at a suspiciously late hour and come round to investigate, on which Richmond declared that he and Stevenson had worked themselves up into such a state of nerves by their own inventions that they both fell on their knees and assured the astonished officer that they were innocent.

But Richmond's stories generally owed a great deal to his imagination.

The only ghost-story, by the way, that I ever heard at first hand came from Beavor Lodge, and not from Richmond, but Lady Richmond, who was not given to romancing. They had not long taken possession of the house before Helen, the only daughter, complained to her mother that she was afraid to go to bed because of a 'lady in grey', who came into the night nursery, bent over her bed, and 'whistled through her teeth at her'—an un-

pleasant attention on the part of any spectre. And this apparition was often met in various parts of the house by the servants, and by Lady Richmond herself, who told me that once when she had rung for the parlour-maid to post a note she had just written, the door behind her had opened, and, thinking the maid was there, she had held out the note without looking round. It was not taken, and she turned just in time to see the grey woman standing in the door-way before disappearing.

I never heard that Richmond himself ever saw her, and indeed I think she only appeared to those of her own sex, whom she does not seem to have alarmed particularly. But there were mysterious sounds and screams at times, and at last—I do not know when, but before I knew the Richmonds—certain members of the Psychical Society succeeded in getting into communication with the Grey Lady, who, so I was told, confessed that she had murdered a child in that house.

It seems that years ago it had been used by coiners and other desperate persons, but whether that had any connexion with her crime I never heard.

But after that séance and confession the ghost seemed to have been laid, for she appeared no more for many years—not in fact until Richmond lay dying. Then a nurse who had arrived from the north at a very early hour in the morning told one of his sons that she had just seen a person in the garden who did not seem to have any business there—a woman in a grey dress.

Among the friends to whom James Payn showed the opening chapters of *Vice Versâ* was the late Horace Pym, who invited me to dine at his house in Harley Street before the book actually came out. This was the beginning of another long and greatly valued friendship, and for many years I have been a frequent guest at the beautiful house which he was building near Brasted, and

to which he moved in June 1885. That friendship has, I am thankful to say, been maintained since the deaths of my kind host and hostess by Horace's son by his first marriage and the only survivor of his four children—Major Evelyn Pym, whose two elder sons are now grown up; one of them is my godson, and both, I think, regard me as a friend.

In 1882 Julian, the elder son by the first marriage, was about five, and Evelyn three. There was one daughter by the second marriage, and another was born later, but I think it was some years before the two boys knew that Mrs. Pym was not their own mother, so devoted was she to all four children.

When I first knew Julian he was laid up in bed with what was then supposed to be merely a temporary weakness due to a fall from a carriage. He recovered for a time and ran about as usual, but with gradually increasing difficulty. Then specialists were called in and found that the cause was spinal paralysis, and he was condemned, poor boy, to lie on his back for the rest of his life.

Mercifully, for the greater part of it, he hardly seemed aware of how much he had been deprived; his spirits were high, he had an active mind and a keen sense of humour, and contrived to find the liveliest interest and enjoyment in every incident of his sadly restricted life. He was always busy, playing, reading, writing, and drawing, and I never saw any sign either of complaint or boredom.

When Evelyn went first to a preparatory school and then to Eton, Julian seemed to identify himself with him, and would relate with sparkling eyes how 'we' won some hurdle-race, or rowed in such and such a boat.

This pathetic happiness and content with his lot lasted until he was in his twenty-first year; when he was about eight he wrote a story which he called *The Boy who fought for England*, a story that without any remarkable precocity was what any clever boy of his age but full of vigour

and love of adventure might have written. Poor Julian's only adventures were being carried up and down stairs, and driving slowly through the Foxwold woods, lying on his back in an invalid carriage. I illustrated his story, and got it privately printed for him, and, with Horace's help, Julian 'grangerized' it, and it was sumptuously bound and included in the Foxwold Library catalogue.

After Horace Pym's death—which, mercifully for him, came in Julian's lifetime—there was an obituary paragraph on him stating that 'many will regret the kindly old Quaker, who was the author of, among other works, a novel entitled, *The Boy who fought for England*'.

Which would have amused Horace could he have seen it, for it was a little miracle of inaccuracy. His father had been the rector of Willian in Hertfordshire; Horace Pym was not a Quaker, though connected by marriage with the Foxes and Gurneys, who had been. And a Quaker would hardly have written a book with that particular title. However, *The Times* published a notice of him, written with knowledge and feeling by Rudy Lehmann, who, with his father and mother, had been among his most intimate friends.

Horace Pym was an ideal host; an admirable raconteur with a gift for piling up ludicrous detail which reduced his guests to helpless laughter; he had a great love for and knowledge of Literature and Art, as was shown in his collection of books and pictures. He was the chief partner in a leading firm of solicitors, and one of his clients was Lord Beaconsfield. Horace used to describe an experience of his during that great statesman's last illness; he had called at Curzon Street to inquire after him, and the portly and imposing butler who appeared replied, 'Well, sir, his lordship's not so well to-day. The wind's in the Heast. I'm not so well.'

Horace was a big man, weighing about 17 stone; he was once driving in a hansom with Corney Grain, who

could not have weighed less, when the springs broke, and a street boy, seeing Horace get out first and Corney Grain follow, piped out, 'No b——y wonder!' to their joint delight.

To return to poor Julian. After his father's death he began to realize more and more the bitterness of the fate that denied him any share in the activities and interests that might have been his. I did not know this till near the end, and even then it was not from him. I saw him several times up to the day before he died, but though he was too exhausted to talk much, what he did say was bright and cheerful.

On the morning after I said good-bye to him, with the conviction that it was for the last time, he was alone with his nurse, when she saw him lift his head with a sudden radiant smile. Then he cried joyously, 'There's Dad!' and fell back, released.

I suppose there is some explanation of why so fine a character with such gifts of mind and person, such capacities for enjoying and doing, such uncomplaining courage, should have been allotted so much less than the average share of human opportunities.

But this is a mystery beyond our understanding, and one can only trust that somewhere, somehow, there is abundant compensation for these seeming injustices.

Through Horace Pym I came to know the Frederick Lehmanns and their beautiful and brilliant daughter Nina, afterwards Lady Campbell. Rudy, the eldest son, I had only known at Cambridge by sight, though I had met his brothers in Pashley's rooms at Trinity. But from 1884 and onward Rudy and I were often together at week-ends at Foxwold, and in 1890 or 1891 he became one of my colleagues on the *Punch* staff.

Even at Cambridge, Rudy had been a celebrity; a fine oarsman—he was in one of the Cambridge trial eights,

and, as will be remembered, coached the Oxford University eight for two or three years—was President of the Union, and equally good at all sports, he had ended by taking a first in the Classical Tripos.

Then he was called to the Bar, and practised for a time with success, besides being part-author of a *Digest of Over-ruled Cases*. He contested several constituencies in the Liberal interest, and was eventually returned in 1906 as Member for the Harborough Division, which he represented till 1911. He was practically the founder of *The Granta*—the only Undergraduate periodical which has ever had more than a brief existence, and which, after considerably more than forty years, still flourishes. Under his editorship, Barry Pain made his first appearances in print, and considerably later A. A. Milne and Canon A. C. Deane were among its contributors.

Rudy, with his spare athletic frame and his gallant air, was a striking figure in any company; he was physically and morally fearless, and when, as in the case of the Boer War, his own view differed from that of the majority, he was absolutely indifferent to any loss of popularity it might entail, and nothing would induce him to modify his opinions. He was quick-tempered, and inclined to be overbearing and intolerant at times, but he was always warm-hearted and generous.

He and I generally found ourselves in disagreement over the discussion of the cartoon at Bouverie Street, but I think there was no ill feeling on his part, as I am sure there was none on mine. And whenever I wanted any help on sporting details for my *Punch* work, I always applied to Rudy, and got the promptest and fullest information. When I was writing Mr. Jabberjee's papers and Rudy was coaching the Oxford crew, he arranged for me to be on board the umpire's launch with him during one of the practices.

No one could have known him as I did without feeling

a great admiration and fondness for him. He was a master of light verse; no one has ever written more spiritedly of boat-racing, for instance, or with truer pathos of dogs than Rudy did, while, in prose, his humour was robust and his satire incisive.

It is infinitely sad to think that so splendid and many-sided a life should have ended in several years of bodily disablement and cessation of all activity.

Some time in 1884 I met the brilliant J.K.S., the younger brother of the late Sir Herbert Stephen and son of the Judge. He had a big powerful frame and a massive head, with regular features and piercing light grey eyes; his expression was calm and almost solemn, which gave a piquancy to his frivolous outbursts. In both action and speech he had a sublime disregard for the conventions. His *Lapsus Calami* proved him a worthy successor to Calverley, at a time when the art of light verse in his particular vein seemed to have perished.

He was the wittiest and probably one of the most eloquent speakers at the Union in his day, and I have been told by those who heard him there in the last year of his short life that even Gladstone was not more marvellously effective.

Poor Jim's life was another instance of a beginning full of exceptional promise, only to end tragically in illness and premature death.

He was one of a party with whom I twice rowed down from Oxford to Twickenham; we rowed 'ran-dan', i.e. with two of the oarsmen rowing and the one in the centre sculling. Thanks to George Millar's coaching on Windermere Lake I could row in quite good style, but I was not a powerful oar compared with the others. So Jim extemporized a triolet addressed

*'To Guthrie, steering'*



which ran as follows:

*How swiftly we go  
With thee at the helm!  
As we swing to and fro  
(For the rest of us row)  
How swiftly we go  
With thee at the helm!*

It was on one of these expeditions that the conversation turned on rhymed epitaphs, and especially those in which the deceased's surname was one of the rhymes, I remarked that my own surname would be difficult to fit into a rhyme. 'Not a bit,' said Jim. 'Perfectly easy. Here you are!'

*Here lies all that doth re-  
Main of Mr. Guthrie.*

And I could desire no better inscription when the time comes to require one.

There is an unpublished stanza by him on the Calvinist conceptions of Heaven and Hell which is as follows:

*The burning—at first—would be probably worst,  
But habit the anguish might soften,  
While those who are bored by praising the Lord  
Would be more so by praising Him often.*

It was in the summer of 1887 that I had the honour of meeting Tennyson. I was in rooms at Haslemere and Mr. and Mrs. Richmond Ritchie (as they then were) were staying with me for a few days. Mrs. Ritchie was an intimate friend of the Tennysons and arranged to bring me to luncheon at Aldworth, their house on Blackdown. I do not remember that Tennyson spoke much during the meal, but as we were leaving, he said to me, 'Mr. Guthrie, I hear a dreadful report about you.' I was not alarmed, as his manner was quite genial, and asked what he had

heard. 'Why,' he said, 'I'm told that you *write for "Punch"*.'

I might have reminded him that he himself had twice contributed verses to the paper, but perhaps it was as well that I did not. So I merely admitted that he had been correctly informed, and wondered privately what he would think of me when he read my next contribution—a burlesque recitation based on the Lincolnshire dialect of his 'Northern Farmer'.

I do not suppose he ever read it himself, but his eldest son, Hallam, told me afterwards that he had not only read, but actually recited it at a Freshwater village concert; so I am glad to think it was not resented by the family.

I was told a characteristic story of Tennyson which, so far as I know, has not appeared in print. An enthusiastic admirer of his, who was staying at Aldworth, was, to her intense delight, invited to accompany him for a walk in his old English garden.

They paced the terrace together in silence; he said nothing and she was afraid to speak for fear of losing some priceless utterance. The silence remained unbroken until they had returned to their starting-point, when he remarked abruptly, 'Coals are very dear.' She received this without comment and he remained in abstraction for another tour of the terrace, when he spoke again. 'I get all my meat from London,' he said, and again she did not see her way to following up the subject. Another long silence, and then he stopped beside a clump of carnations which were obviously drooping, and she waited hopefully for a comment that she could always treasure. But all Tennyson said was: 'It's those cursed rabbits!' Which was the sum total of his conversation on that particular afternoon.

It hardly needs saying, however, that with those with whom he was in sympathy, Tennyson could be as true and great a poet in his talk as he was in his writings,

however prosaic he might choose to be with the profane vulgar.

It was also owing to Mrs. (afterwards Lady) Ritchie that I had the privilege of lunching with another great poet—Swinburne. I was staying with the Ritchies at Wimbledon, and went with her to lunch with him and Watts-Dunton at the Pines.

Max Beerbohm has described a similar experience of his own with such charming sympathy and humour that any further attempt on my part would be futile. So I shall only record one incident connected with my visit. George Smith had just begun his splendid *Dictionary of National Biography*, and had presented Mrs. Richmond Ritchie with a copy of the first volume. This she had brought with her, thinking, as she explained to Watts-Dunton, that Swinburne would like to look through it. Unfortunately Watts-Dunton's hearing was very little better than Swinburne's, and he roared into the latter's ear, 'Take it, my dear Swinburne, take it! A magnificent gift!'

So Swinburne took it accordingly, with so profuse a gratitude that poor Mrs. Ritchie found it impossible to confess that she had only intended a loan of the volume.

Swinburne's deafness prevented him from taking much, if any, part in the conversation at luncheon, and all I can recall of him is his Shakespeare-like high domed head, and his strange sea-green eyes, as he sat opposite. Afterwards I was less fortunate than 'Max', for he did not show me his books, nor, probably divining that I was not a kindred spirit, did he say more to me than courtesy prescribed.

I sometimes passed him afterwards on Wimbledon Common, a slight large-headed figure with a light quick step that was almost dancing, but I never ventured to remind him of our meeting. I felt sure that it would be

futile to try to recall an impression of which he had never been conscious.

It must have been somewhere in the late eighties that I first met George Meredith. Through Walter Frith I had become acquainted with a young Russian, André Raffalovich, the son of a Paris banker. He was a mere boy, no more than eighteen I was told, though he may have been older, and he had just come to London well furnished with introductions and taken a ground-floor flat in Albert Hall Mansions, where he entertained lavishly, and it was at luncheon at his flat that I met George Meredith.

He had an interesting and distinguished face with thick curly grey hair, and spoke in elaborate periods in a deep and booming voice; he never said anything that was not well worth hearing, and, being well aware of it, he was a little impatient of interruptions. Either on this occasion or a later one at the same table he had begun to speak when one of the party, a girl, incautiously broke in with some remark. On which Meredith observed: 'I had just launched a conversational barque for which I had ventured to anticipate a favourable voyage, and it had scarcely left port before foundering untimely—sunk by this young lady's comment. Precisely why she should have chosen to submerge it I can but conjecture. It may be that the sails or the rigging did not meet with her approval. Or possibly the Captain had—ah—a red nose. Or perhaps—' (and here he invented a number of similar explanations before concluding with) 'But, whatever her reasons, my unfortunate vessel is—ah—irrecoverably lost.'

It was quite good-humouredly said, but it was a rebuke notwithstanding, and intended to be one.

Years afterwards I met Meredith at a dinner-party, where for once he was talked down. This was by Frank Harris, who was then, I think, editing the *Fortnightly*, and who was as noted a conversationalist and had quite as

booming a voice as Meredith himself. Meredith began to lead as usual, but was never permitted to finish. Frank Harris interrupted by disagreeing with him, and expounded his own views with vigour and eloquence. For a time George Meredith seemed a little restive under what must have been, for him, an unprecedented experience, but gradually he became spell-bound by Harris's undoubted power, and ended by evidently admiring his antagonist.

When we went up to the drawing-room, Frank Harris somehow mesmerized us into sitting in a circle round him, while he told us two of the stories he was writing for the *Fortnightly*—very good stories they were, too, on Bret Harteian lines; and no one seemed more impressed by them than George Meredith.

I shall always regret that I had an opportunity of seeing and hearing George Meredith again not long before his death—and lost it by my own lack of courage. His son Will had arranged to meet me at a station on the Dorking line and bicycle to Box Hill, where we were to have tea with his father at his cottage. Somehow I got to Dorking without having seen Will, and so, hoping he had gone on before me, I cycled to Box Hill, and climbed the hill to the cottage. When I got there I found that he had not arrived. Through an open window I could hear the maid trying to explain to George Meredith, who had grown rather deaf, and evidently resented being disturbed, that I had come to see him. And then I heard 'Guthrie? Guthrie? Never heard of him! Ask him what he wants to see me about!' and realized that he had either never been told of Will's arrangement, or had forgotten it.

Without Will to account for me I did not feel equal to facing George Meredith just then, explaining the situation, and obliging him to entertain an unwelcome guest, so I told the maid that I would not disturb him, and went away.

Will arrived later, but unfortunately after my departure. If I could have been sure that he would be there at all, I should have risked a rather formidable quarter of an hour, and I wish I had. But in the circumstances I don't know that I could very well have acted otherwise than I did. To carry off that interview successfully would have required an assurance and a charm of manner which I was conscious that I did not possess.

I regret it the more because there are few of his books that I have not read many times, and always with increased admiration for so great and original a genius as George Meredith.

Meredith had no very high opinion of the Drama of his day, or of those who represented it on the stage; I remember his concluding a satirical description of an imaginary modern comedy with the words: 'And when the play comes to an end and the final curtain has fallen, we haste to congratulate the performers on—ah—having finished.'

In 1890 H. M. Stanley stood as Conservative candidate for North Lambeth. He had married the beautiful and gifted Miss Dorothy Tennant, and as I was already a friend of hers, and of her mother and sister, Mrs. Frederick Myers, I found myself enrolled as one of his canvassers, and frequently met him at dinner at Mrs. Tennant's house in Richmond Terrace.

I remember him at those dinners as a silent and rather grim figure, with thick grey hair, a livid brown complexion, and the eyes of a caged lion. At his meetings he was a forcible but by no means an ingratiating speaker, and I had an impression that he was intensely bored by the whole business, and cared very little whether he won or lost the election. But I heard him give a vivid and picturesque account of life in the African forests once when addressing the workmen at Price's Candle Factory, and they listened with evident interest.

Other meetings were less orderly, for reports had been circulated by the opposition suggesting—of course quite untruly—that Stanley's expeditions had been characterized by cruelty. This, of course, had its effect on many of his hearers, but a great deal of the hostility was carefully organized; after one meeting the Stanleys and I made a rush for their brougham between a lane of hired prize fighters, who kept off the crowd until we were safely inside, when we drove off, minus one of the carriage doors.

Another meeting is memorable for me because one of the speakers, a young Irishman who had been a lieutenant of Stanley's in Africa, made the very finest bull I have ever heard, surpassing even Sammy's efforts.

'Gentlemen,' he said, 'if this measure' (I forget what it was—probably the Home Rule Bill), 'if this measure is passed, it will throw down an apple of Discord which will burst into foire and flood the entire counthry!'

But none of his hearers seemed to think what an unusual kind of apple this would be.

I found canvassing quite amusing, though I did not consider it useful, except as a means of discovering what voters could be counted on as being in our favour. There did not appear to be many of these, but I found that the chief point was to listen to whatever a voter might have to say. And sometimes, after revealing himself as an ardent Radical, he would say, "'Oo did you say your man was? Stanley, eh? Well, I dunno as I mayn't give *'im* a turn this time.' But I never thought it likely that he would.

On the day of the election I looked up a little Italian confectioner in the Waterloo Road who had promised me to vote for Stanley and found he had not done so yet; he said he couldn't as it was raining. So I took him to the polling station under my umbrella, and his vote was, I believe, the only one Stanley owed to my personal effort.

I was one of the tellers in the counting of votes, and for

some time I thought we were doing very well. Then an enthusiastic supporter of Stanley's—a pompous person with a high sandy crest, who struck me as the living image of Mr. Pumblechook—leaned over my shoulder and whispered, 'Prepare your mind for a defeat.'

And a defeat it was—Coldwell, the Radical candidate, being returned by a considerable majority. I drove back to Richmond Terrace with Stanley, and if he made any allusion to the election at all, I have forgotten what it was. But I remember that Hawke, his man, opened the front door, and that Stanley's remark to him was: 'Hawke, you're beaten.' Which I thought an oddly detached way of announcing his defeat.

Whether Stanley was detached or not, he came forward at the next election and was successful. I do not think that he took any great part in the debates, or that he was particularly successful as a speaker. But, of course, a parliamentary reputation has to be gained in the House itself, which pays little regard to achievements outside its precincts.

Henry James, when I first knew him, wore a neat brown beard and had a striking resemblance to King Edward VII when Prince of Wales. In later years he was clean-shaven, which completely transformed him into the likeness of a particularly subtle abbé.

In conversation he was meticulously (no other adverb is so appropriate) careful to convey his precise meaning, so that his remarks became a sort of Chinese nest of parentheses; it took him some time to arrive at his point but he always reached it, and it was always well worth waiting for.

On occasions, however, he would be not only accurate but concise. I met him at a dinner-party once, shortly before the production of a play of his, and his hostess asked him if he did not find rehearsals a great strain. To which



he replied: 'I have been sipping the—er—cup of Detachment.' No phrase could be a more perfect description of the state of mind to which most dramatists find themselves reduced at a certain stage of rehearsals.

It may have been—though I am not sure that it was—from that same dinner-party in Kensington that he and I were walking back together when, as we came near De Vere Gardens, where he lived, a newsboy approached, croaking out some evil tidings, and bearing a contents sheet with 'Famous Actor Murdered' on it. We bought a paper, and were shocked to find that the handsome and popular Terriss had been stabbed to death that evening at the stage door of the Adelphi Theatre.

Henry James never wrote a play that had any great success on the stage; he had great gifts, but the sense of the theatre was not one of them. The minute analysis of impressions and motives which distinguishes his novels could hardly be conveyed in dialogue, and though he condensed his dialogue to a form which he probably considered an inartistic compromise, it always remained more literary than dramatic.

'Every dramatist, my dear Guthrie,' I remember his saying to me, 'and by "dramatist" I mean a writer who seriously attempts that most difficult and elusive art of expressing his impressions of life in a dramatic form—be that form Tragedy, Comedy, Melodrama, or what you will—every dramatist, then, as he sits at his desk to evolve his conceptions, must first visualize, or have before his mental eye, the proscenium of a theatre. And above that proscenium an immense clock, its hands indicating the hour of eight-thirty. Those hands will move inexorably on, till they reach eleven, and that deplorably insufficient space of time is all that is allowed him in which to make the actions and motives, however intricate, of his *dramatis personae* intelligible to an audience which he dare not count upon as possessing more than the average

degree of intelligence. In that busy period of two hours and a half—and even there I am considerably overstating it in omitting to deduct the time occupied by the two intervals, which may represent anything from twenty to thirty minutes—within two hours, then, he must present and solve the problem he has set himself, or he is doomed.'

When *The Man from Blankley's* was in rehearsal, he asked me to tell him what the play was about; I did, and his comment was: 'A most interesting problem,' which I'm afraid was not at all the light in which I had regarded it myself, though I suppose there is a sense in which any play may be considered as a problem to be worked out to a satisfactory solution. It was certainly Henry James's view.

I was one of the audience at the first night of his *Guy Domville* at the St. James's—a very terrible first night indeed. It was a costume play; the period early Georgian; George Alexander played the name-part and was extremely well supported, while the stage sets designed by Edwin Abbey were charming. For a time all seemed to be going well, the dialogue, being Henry James's, was exquisitely phrased, and the house listened to it attentively. But before the first act was over it was clear that the play was not gripping the audience; the coughs which are so infallible a sign of it grew more and more frequent. However, the house was full of his friends and admirers, and the applause at the end of the act was loud enough, though it came chiefly from the stalls and dress circle.

The second act went fairly well, until the entrance of one of the female characters in an extraordinary head-dress like a gigantic fur muff. It had, I believe, been copied from a contemporary print, and was strictly of the period, but unfortunately it gave the gallery the excuse they had been waiting for, and from that moment the fate of the play was sealed. At the second curtain the applause from the lower parts of the house irritated the gallery into counter demonstrations, and throughout the third act

they constantly interrupted the performers by laughter and jeers. George Alexander, though quite unused to such a reception, kept his nerve admirably, and so did his company, but when the final curtain fell there was an exhibition of brutality by some of the audience which I have never before or since seen equalled in any theatre. Loud calls for 'Author' came from every part of the house, and when Henry James appeared, evidently hoping that by some miracle the play was saved, the applause was drowned by merciless booing and hissing from the gallery, which had a visibly withering effect on him.

The rest of us did our best, but no amount of clapping could prevail over those venomous boos, and Henry James retired, deadly pale but dignified, fully aware that his play had failed.

I cannot say that I thought it a good play; the conduct of the hero in the last act in resigning the woman he loved, and who he knew loved him, to his rival and best friend, whom she did not love at all, and performing this self-sacrifice in her presence, would have wrecked any piece. But, even apart from the fact that it was the work of so distinguished a man, it had a literary grace which entitled it at least to respect and courtesy.

If Henry James was not intended for a dramatist, some of his work has provided the material for a successful drama, as was proved by the production of that most striking and effective play *Berkeley Square*, which I wish he could have lived long enough to see.

As a novelist his fame is secure enough, and even if some of his longer fictions are less read nowadays, the author of such short stories as *Daisy Miller* and *The Turn of the Screw* is in no danger of being forgotten.

I knew Rhoda Broughton for a great many years, and often lunched with her at her house on Richmond Hill, and subsequently at the various Chelsea flats which she took

when she came up from the country for a few weeks in London.

It seems strange to me, as a lifelong admirer of her work, that it should apparently be so little remembered nowadays; she had the rare gift of making her stories real and vivid; she knew how to draw girls with a charm that made their worst faults of temper pardonable, she had an unerring eye for all the fashions and follies of her day, and a light and humorous touch in dealing with them which she never lost. *Joan* and *A Beginner*, for instance, are both books which, in my opinion at least, entitle her to rank with Jane Austen as a satirist and observer.

Both novels, I suppose, are little known to the present generation of readers, but I believe that, sooner or later, they will be rediscovered, and that then it will be found wonderful that so racy and humorous a writer could ever have been forgotten.

Authors, however, have their fates—often undeserved—and once submerged in the waters of oblivion are not easily restored to animation.

Rhoda Broughton was a good and sympathetic friend, but as pungent in her talk as in her writings, and it was dangerous to be guilty of any affectation in her company. I sat opposite to her at a dinner-party once and heard her neighbour—a middle-aged man who considered himself, for no very obvious reasons, irresistible to women—say to her: ‘I should like you to know my boy—he’s much nicer than I am!’ To which she replied: ‘Would you like me to say that that’s impossible—or that I can quite believe it? Because I’ll say either.’

I met Russell Lowell—then the American Ambassador—at Whitby in 1883. He was a friend of the du Mauriers, and often took part in our expeditions up the Esk or over the Moors.

I have a vivid recollection of him at a picnic at Cock Mill,

in a grey top-hat and frock-coat, dancing 'the Lancers' with dignified accuracy on the lawn by the creek. The only humorous remark of his that I can remember was, I am afraid, scarcely worthy of him. We were passing some big steam-cranes, which inspired the comment: 'The Cranes of Ibycus!' But every humorist is liable to make jokes like that in unguarded moments. He was pleasant, scholarly, and courtly mannered, and popular in Society. England has always been fortunate in the matter of American ambassadors, and Lowell was as distinguished a representative of his country as any of them.

When I was a boy at Grimstone's I first made the acquaintance of *The Jumping Frog*, which gave me an unbounded admiration for Mark Twain.

I was at King's College School, and had read everything of his that had yet appeared, when he came over to England for the first time and gave a lecture on 'The Sandwich Islands', which, to our intense delight, my brother Leonard and I were taken to hear. We both found the lecture disappointing; it was difficult, for us at least, to know when Mark Twain was intending to be humorous or merely instructive, any burlesque exaggeration in his statements was lost on us, and two stories that he told we had read before in his books. We liked his description of the female costume, 'the women wear—well, the women wear just a smile', and a remark about the native dogs whose chief beauty was their luxuriant tails, 'A friend of mine said that if he had one of those dogs, he should keep the tail, and throw the balance of the dog away!'

But on the whole we were distinctly bored.

Some years afterwards I read *The Mississippi Pilot*, *Tom Sawyer*, and that masterpiece *Huckleberry Finn*, but that I should ever meet and speak to Mark Twain seemed beyond all reasonable probability in those days.

However, I did meet him on two occasions. The first was at a party at Mrs. Tennant's house in Richmond Terrace, when he told negro ghost stories in the Southern dialect, and acted them with a weird effectiveness that showed what a success he might have had on the stage. He spoke with a slow drawl and pronounced accent.

The second occasion, which I have described elsewhere, was many years afterwards, when he dined at the *Punch* table as the guest of the proprietors, the staff being invited to meet him.

There is a story of him which, if it has appeared in print at all, has not done so for a great many years, and which I shall therefore risk repeating. He was travelling on a very slow train in the States, and after repeated stoppages called for the conductor: 'Conductor,' he said, 'I should like to suggest that you unhitch the cow-catcher from the front of the locomotive, and fasten it on to the rear car. Because', he explained, 'it appears to me very unlikely that this train is going to overtake any cow. But I do see a serious danger that a cow may stroll after this train, jump into the rear car, and bite some of the passengers.'

I met Rudyard Kipling first at dinner at his uncle's and aunt's (Mr. and Mrs. Edward Poynter's) house at Albert Gate, I think somewhere in the late eighties. I had known and admired his Indian stories almost from the time they appeared, as some of them had been lent to me by a friend of his and mine. He was a vivacious and amusing talker, and I still remember his description that evening of his trials as an editor in India when 'making up' his paper with native compositors.

We became friends; he came to my rooms once or twice, and we went for walks together occasionally. On one of them he told me the outline of a story he was writing—it was the priceless one of the medical man and

the drunken navvy on the platform of a country railway station on a Sunday afternoon in summer, and I am sure he found me an appreciative listener. On another he was very anxious that I should write a story on a subject he suggested—a 'monkey-puzzler' tree, its owners wondering whether it really would puzzle a monkey to climb it, an organ-grinder appearing with a monkey, the experiment made with catastrophic results. I, however, protested that he would treat the idea infinitely better himself—which I am glad to say he did.

Later I was asked to dine—I think again at Albert Gate—to meet him and his fiancée, Miss Balestier, and that was the last time I ever had any talk with him. But in 1900 he wrote me an extraordinary kind and generous letter about 'The Brass Bottle', then running as a serial in the pages of the *Strand Magazine*.

I saw him and his wife at Lady Poynter's funeral, but it did not seem a time to remind him of our old acquaintance, especially as he showed no sign of recognition, and we parted without speaking, greatly to my own regret.

I first read *Erewhon* in a boat on the backs while I was up at Cambridge, and it made a deep impression on me, for until then, although I was anything but religiously minded, it had never occurred to me to question the orthodox creed.

But I was not fated to meet the author of *Erewhon* till near the end of his life, and when I did, the meeting can hardly be called successful—either from Butler's point of view or my own.

It was at a dinner-party; the ladies had just left, and my host brought me to where Butler sat and introduced us. All Butler said was: 'I was in the midst of a most interesting discussion with my neighbour here.' And naturally all I could do was to beg that I might not interrupt that discussion. Which I certainly did not, for it was

continued without any effort to include me in it, and as it quite probably concerned the authorship of the *Odyssey*, I was more than content to stay out.

Apparently Butler had not caught my name, for he wrote to our hostess the next day, expressing his regret that he had had no talk with me, as he knew and liked *Vice Versâ*. I was sorry, too, though of course I had quite understood that he could not be expected to welcome my inopportune presence in the circumstances.

The unfortunate thing was that I lost my only opportunity of a conversation with Samuel Butler.

Tall and burly, with blunt features, rather small but honest and kindly eyes, and a reddish pointed beard, Bram Stoker would probably not have impressed a first acquaintance as possessing any marked degree of diplomacy. And yet he had more than the average amount or he could not have acted as Henry Irving's business manager for many years with unvarying skill and success. Nor did his genial rather boyish face suggest the slightest taste for the macabre, but he was the author of *Dracula*, perhaps the most blood-curdling story in the English language.

I've no doubt he thoroughly enjoyed writing it, for he had a pretty taste in vampires. Once when we were walking home from a party together late at night, he said, in the soft Irish accent I cannot attempt to suggest: 'I've an idea for another story. It would open like this: A celebrated Harley Street doctor in his consulting-room, a patient shown in. The patient is a cadaverous-looking man, and evidently is very anxious about his health. For some time he cannot bring himself to speak out, but at last he tells the doctor, who of course is bound by his profession to secrecy, what is troubling him.

'He is a vampire, and has just discovered that his latest victim is in a galloping consumption. So naturally



he's in terror lest his own health may be affected. Now don't you think that's a strong situation, eh?'

It was such a strong situation that I laughed long and loud, until he joined in, and between us I'm afraid we must have awakened many a sleeper in that quiet Chelsea street.

I remember two of Bram's stories of his Irish experiences which he told inimitably. One was of how, when he had undertaken to carve at supper during a dance, one of the maids came up and said, 'If ye please, Sorr, will ye cot me a slice of beef for the pianner.'

The other was of a visit to a country-house where the large staff of servants begged unblushingly for tips at parting, from the butler down to the page, who said pathetically, 'Ah, spare a copper or two for the pore bottoms!'

Bram wrote other books, but *Dracula* was by far the most popular of them. It still sells, after going through countless editions, and I am glad to say that highly realistic stage and film versions of it have brought a small fortune to his widow.

I only wish he could have lived to see it on the screen, for I gather that, unlike most of such adaptations, it did full justice to its original.

I suppose that there are not many alive now who remember Hamilton Aïdé even by name, but from the seventies till the end of the nineteenth century he was among the celebrities of his day.

He had once, as I think du Maurier told me, held a commission in one of the Guards regiments, but had left the Army while still a young man, and ever since had devoted himself to Art, Music, and Literature, in two at least of which he had obtained distinction.

As a water-colour painter, although he continued to sketch until the end of his life, I should not say that he ever

rose much above the amateur level, but he wrote one or two novels which were popular, a comedy *A Nine Days' Wonder*, which had a successful run at, I think, the old Court Theatre, and, quite in his later years, he adapted from the French a farce *Dr. Bill*, which George Alexander produced and appeared in with equal success at the St. James's.

Aïdé was also popular as a composer. Years before I met him I heard in some one's rooms at Trinity a song called 'Remember or Forget', the words and music of which were so charming that I asked who had composed them, and both were Aïdé's.

When I first made his acquaintance he must have been about sixty, although he always looked considerably younger than his actual age, for he never lost any of his abundant and ambrosial locks, or changed perceptibly in other ways to the end of his long life.

He was slightly below the average height, neat in figure, and always perfectly turned out; he knew everybody and went everywhere, and his musical parties in his Hanover Square flat were always crowded in the Season.

But when he was not travelling or visiting on the Continent he spent most of his later years in his delightful home at Ascot, in which I recall spending many pleasant and interesting week-ends; in one of them the house-party included the Beerbohm Trees.

Tree had just received the script of *A Woman of No Importance* from Wilde, and read it to us in the drawing-room after dinner. He read it well, as he naturally would, and was distinctly put out when at the conclusion of the second act, a lady remarked, 'And is that the end of the play?'

But, to tell the truth, neither I nor Aïdé thought the play would be as successful as it proved to be, and even when I saw it on the stage I could not consider it a

masterpiece, as in a very different way *The Importance of being Earnest* undoubtedly is.

I think that to the end of his life Aïdé retained dramatic ambitions and, though I have no positive knowledge of the facts, had submitted more than one play to managers. If so, he probably found, as all ageing dramatists must find, that the technique which had once pleased the public had lost its vogue, and that he had fallen out of touch with the times.

However that may have been, his intimate friend, Miss Harriet Young, the musician, who was with him at the end, told me that in his delirium he evidently imagined that he was conducting a rehearsal of a comedy in which—unlike rehearsals in general—all was going smoothly, and he was perfectly happy.

It was well that Death itself should come kindly to him, who in his long and happy life had done so many kindnesses. There was a very beautiful memorial service for him at St. Paul's, Wilton Place, with exquisite music and singing, and as I sat in the church I could not help thinking how pleased he would be with the perfection with which this his last party of all was being conducted.

In July 1905 I met Henry Irving twice, the first time was at dinner at the Bernard Partridges' beautiful Georgian house in Church Street, Chelsea. The Burnands, Plowden the magistrate, and Mrs. Rhodes an American lady, were the other guests.

Irving had become a little bent and his long hair was very grey, his calm scholarly face more worn than when I had last met him off the stage, but it had the same clear ivory pallor, and his general appearance had the distinction with a shade of something strange and aloof which had always made him unmistakable wherever he happened to be.

At dinner there was some mention of a man we all

knew who had acquired a building plot from a highly exclusive colony on the east coast and had lately to the intense disgust of his friends there sold his plot to an outsider. 'Ah,' commented Irving, with the intonation of one of his sinister speeches in *The Bells*, 'our friend Blank was always—a—fond of—h'm—ah—making a bit, eh?'

Then he told us of a bailie he had met in Glasgow who enlarged to him on the number of cases in his court that were due to 'drenk'. 'It's the whusky that does it,' he groaned, 'it's a' the whusky. Why, there's a friend of mine who's made nae less than £120,000 by whusky alone. Aye,' he concluded, 'if I had to begin all over again, I'd be a disteller. There's naething like whusky!' Irving gave this with a grim enjoyment.

Next he related how he had unwittingly received a bad half-crown in his change and handed it to a cabman for his fare and how the man, who must have been singularly unobservant, promptly gave him into custody for attempting to pass false coin. Irving gave a long and dramatic account of his being taken to a police station and protesting that he was due at the theatre. The superintendent said, 'Well—' (a long pause) 'you can't—ah—go away.' I said to him, 'May I write a note?' 'We can't allow you any paper,' he said. 'Then,' continued Irving, 'I took a loose piece of paper from my pocket and wrote' (here he went through the action of writing) 'a letter to Sir George Henry' (who was the Head of the Police at that time). 'The effect was—ah—instantaneous, they overwhelmed me with apologies and the cabman—ah—drove me on to the Lyceum.'

In the drawing-room afterwards he gave us an account of a certain charity matinee of *King René's Daughter* at the Lyceum, which was got up by Sir Theodore and Lady Martin and Miss Geraldine Jewsbury, and how on the morning of the production they had turned up with an enormous

box containing bunches of grapes, which they proceeded to nail up on various parts of the scenery (and here Irving unexpectedly roused himself, got out of his chair, and went through a pantomime of using hammer and nails on the drawing-room walls). 'And this,' he concluded, coming back and sinking into his chair, 'this was the man who in the *Quarterly Review* was complaining of me—of Me, mark you, for over-elaboration!'

This took some time in telling; during most of it he lay back in a low arm-chair with his chin resting on his shirt front, now and then nothing could be heard but occasional scraps such as 'Ah,' I said, 'H'm? Dear me!', 'Indeed?' and there would be moments when the story seemed lost. But all the time he was really working up to his climax which when it came was most effective.

He also told us how he had once been offered the Lyceum Theatre for £120,000, but being advised by the proprietor of a leading daily not to give more than £80,000 for it had lost the opportunity. 'And', he concluded, 'the site alone is worth double the money now!'

He stayed late, smoking cigar after cigar, and holding us all by his extraordinary magnetic personality whether he talked or was silent.

Two days later I met him again at luncheon at the Henry Lucys'. Charles Wyndham was one of the party and told a story of a *nouveau riche* describing how he came to choose his wife. 'I couldn't make up my mind whether it was to be Louisa or her sister Maria,' he said. 'And all of a sudden I come on a picture—a religious subject it was—and under it was "'Ave Maria", which I took to be a sign.'

At the end Irving leant across the table and said to Wyndham with judicial approval, 'That story's all *right*.'

Irving was particularly kind and gracious to me that afternoon as I said good-bye at his brougham door and

I saw him drive off, little knowing that I had seen him for the last time.

Within three months, on October 13th, 1905, Henry Irving when appearing as Becket at the Bradford Theatre was seized with syncope just after uttering Becket's dying words 'Into thy hands, O Lord, into thy hands', and though he lived for an hour or so longer he never spoke again.

So fine and well-graced an actor could not have wished for a worthier way of quitting the stage, and Henry Irving's death was the noble climax to a splendid career.

Until very recently the greatest actor's fame could not long survive him and soon became a mere tradition, and in Irving's day there were no talking films to show generations that never saw him what he was at his best. To attempt to do so in words is probably quite hopeless. But no other actor I have ever seen had his power of holding and fascinating an audience.

And this in spite of mannerisms that would have been fatal to most actors; he pronounced his vowels in a manner peculiar to himself, he was often unintelligible and occasionally almost inaudible; he walked with a slight drag in one leg.

His personality—the face with its ivory pallor, the keen narrow eyes under the heavy eyebrows, the clear-cut slightly aquiline nose, and thin sardonic lips—was unmistakable in any character, but that never destroyed the illusion. He became that character without ceasing to be Henry Irving. And his range was wide. As Charles the First he could by the kingliness of his bearing and the distinction and beauty of his appearance excite passionate sympathy in a very indifferent play, and a more princely or more intensely interesting Hamlet than his was I have never seen nor can hardly imagine.

Then in such parts as Mephistopheles, or Dubosc in

*The Lyons Mail*, he became the very embodiment of evil, while as Mathias in *The Bells* he gave a representation of a murderer suddenly haunted by the recollection of a crime he had almost forgotten, which was absolutely terrifying.

And all these three plays were poor enough in themselves—it was Irving's genius that gave them their life and magic. As Sergeant Brewster in the late Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's excellent one-act play *Waterloo*, Irving perhaps for the only time was unrecognizable; nothing could have been truer or more moving than his dying Peninsular veteran.

Off the stage Irving preserved his unique distinction; he was always calm and self-possessed, with a touch of irony or satire in his manner at times; it was impossible to imagine him as being ever at a loss or appearing in the least degree ridiculous; there was something regal about him and also a mysterious aloofness at times which seemed to set him above his fellows.

His elder son, Harry, closely resembled him in appearance and was an excellent actor especially in parts that his father had created, but he never dominated and thrilled his audiences quite so masterfully and completely as did Henry Irving, whose magnetism was too personal to be transmitted.

I only once met the late Miss Isadora Duncan, and that was at the very beginning of her career. It was at an evening party at the Holman Hunts' charming old house at Fulham. Whether she was a guest or came there professionally, I don't know, but she performed several dances that evening. I remember her prefacing one of them by announcing: 'The next dance is intended to represent the remorse of the boar after slaying Adonis', which I thought rather an ambitious undertaking, and it did not seem to me that her rendering of a remorseful

boar was particularly realistic, graceful as it undoubtedly was.

I was introduced to her afterwards, and my recollection of her is that of a slight and rather prim girl, with a touch of the typical American 'school marm'. She told us how she based her dancing on a careful study of the Greek vases at the British Museum, and before she left she offered to come early some morning and dance barefooted on the lawn for Holman Hunt's sole benefit—a proposal which he gently discountenanced.

There was nothing in the Isadora Duncan of that period to indicate the brilliant temperamental artist who was to lead so adventurous and so unhappy a life.



## VIII

### '*Punch*'

**S**HORTLY after *Vice Versâ* had appeared, Burnand wrote to me suggesting that I should become a contributor to *Punch*, and during my tour with Arthur Pearson in the Black Forest in 1882 I sent in two articles, one of which never reached the *Punch* office, and the other, as Burnand explained in a genial letter, referred to a subject which was no longer of sufficient interest.

So I did not try again until 1886, when I sent him a short article on the reflections of a Guy Fawkes—guys were guys in those days—which caused him to propose that I should become an occasional contributor, with a retaining fee of three guineas a week, and without any obligation to contribute except when I felt inclined.

I accepted this, and at the end of the year was invited to take a seat at the *Punch* Table, which I did at the beginning of 1887.

The staff then consisted of John Tenniel, Linley Sambourne, George du Maurier, Charles Keene, Gil and Arthur à Beckett, Harry Furniss, E. J. Milliken, Henry Lucy, and Percival Leigh, with Burnand in the editorial chair.

The Dinner was always on a Wednesday, and in those days at 6.30. We dined in a first-floor room of the old *Punch* office in Bouverie Street—a rather ramshackle house which was pulled down in 1897 and replaced by a new building, which is now succeeded by a larger and more commodious one on the same site.

The famous Table is large, a long oval with a plain deal top, on which every member of the staff from Thackeray downwards has carved his initials.

Some years before the War it was lent for exhibition at the White City, where I think its extreme plainness surprised and disappointed the public. 'I did think they'd have 'ad Meogany!' I heard one spectator at least remark. 'Well, you see,' said her companion, 'if it 'ad been they wouldn't have been allowed to cut their names on it.' It would certainly have been more difficult.

During dinner conversation was general; it was not until after dessert that Burnand would rap on the table, and remark, 'Gentlemen, the Cartoon.' Later on there were two cartoons, the first to be drawn by Tenniel, the second, usually referred to by Burnand as 'Cartoon Junior', by Sambourne, and later by Bernard Partridge.

Burnand was at his best at the *Punch* dinners. Handsome and debonair, of middle height, with a clear florid complexion, hair just beginning to turn grey, thick black eyebrows, humorous blue eyes, slightly aquiline nose, moustaches and a small pointed beard, he radiated good humour and joviality.

He was extremely tactful in his conduct of the discussion, always abstaining from putting forward any idea of his own until all his staff had had the opportunity of making a suggestion, and it had been thoroughly discussed and found impracticable.

I do not indeed remember him ever suggesting a subject himself, and he always avoided making any use of his authority as editor to impress his own views upon us—an example, I may add, which was followed by his successor, Sir Owen Seaman.

But if Burnand's hand was light, it was firm; he was always prompt in recalling the talk from unprofitable digressions and keeping it to the point, or laughing away some suggestion that was unsuited to the occasion.

As *Punch* appeared a week after the Dinner, it was necessary, of course, first to anticipate as far as possible what would be the chief topic of interest seven days

ahead, and then to decide what view *Punch* took of it, and how that view should be expressed by the cartoon.

When Parliament was sitting, and a political subject was obvious, Lucy's knowledge of the House of Commons made it easy to foresee what would be before it next week. And occasions of general rejoicing or mourning, or wars of our own or other nations were not so unexpected as to defeat calculation.

But on one occasion at least the cartoon of the week had a bitter irony for all Englishmen. On the day that brought the news of the death of Gordon, *Punch* appeared with a cartoon representing his triumphant rescue by the Khartoum Relief Expedition. There had been many warnings that the relieving forces would arrive too late, but the general feeling was optimistic, and evidently shared by those who settled the next week's cartoon at the *Punch* Table.

John Tenniel looked, when I first met him and until he grew a beard in his extreme old age, very like the best type of cavalry colonel.

He was tall, slim, and upright, clean-shaven, except for long and drooping moustaches, quietly courteous and dignified, with a peculiarly distinguished voice. Bernard Partridge always said, and I fully agree, that no one spoke more perfect English than Tenniel.

One had only to look at him to recognize that any pettiness or meanness, even in thought, was absolutely impossible to him; he was as much loved as he was honoured by all who knew him, and to the end of his days he was extraordinarily modest as to his powers as a draughtsman and illustrator.

He had always been a great athlete; a good oarsman, an expert swordsman—he had lost the sight of one eye when fencing as a young man at a School of Arms—and an excellent rider (I remember his telling me how he used

to meet Anthony Trollope in the hunting field). I think he no longer hunted by the time I joined the staff, but he rode regularly until quite late in life.

I don't remember that he ever suggested a subject himself for the cartoon; he would sit smoking a long clay churchwarden, on the bowl of which he had drawn his monogram, listening and making a quiet comment now and then. Sometimes he would object with a kind of humorous petulance. 'Now you're refining! You'd got quite a good cut, and you want to spoil it!' And of course he was never asked to adopt any treatment to which he objected.

He was not fond of what he called 'perfunctory' cuts, especially those in which Royalty figured, and these were certainly the least satisfactory of his drawings, but I am sure he enjoyed representing the British Lion or the Russian Bear, or for that matter any animal, in a cartoon, and I think he had a fondness too for any subject connected with Shakespeare's plays.

I always found him, though he was much my senior, a kind and sympathetic friend; he took an interest in my *Punch* work, and seemed to like to know what I was thinking of doing, and to encourage me in it.

He was a widower, and I believe, though I never heard him say so, had lost his wife not long after their marriage. When I knew him he was living in Portsdown Road, Maida Vale, with an unmarried sister who might have been, and quite probably was, the model for one of Leech's portly and handsome *matres familiarum*.

Tenniel all through his life had shrunk from any form of publicity; he did his work as a cartoonist and illustrator, and he could not help knowing that it was good work, but he was absolutely unable to see why there should be any fuss made about it. So that when in 1901 he was offered a knighthood he was not only surprised, but strongly inclined to refuse it if he possibly could. However, it

was represented to him that, in the interests of *Punch*, he must accept the honour, and it was that consideration alone which decided Tenniel to do so.

Then, on June 12th of that year, there was a banquet in his honour in the Whitehall Rooms of the Hotel Metropole. A duke—which duke I forget—was in the chair; at the high table were Mr. Arthur Balfour, as he then was, Lord James of Hereford, the Hon. Rufus Choate, the American Ambassador, Mr. Augustine Birrell, and many other distinguished men. Mr. Balfour proposed Tenniel's health with his usual graceful felicity, the Toastmaster called: 'My Lord Duke, Your Excellency, My Lords and Gentlemen—pray silence for Our Guest,' and Tenniel rose to reply.

He did not seem at all nervous; he looked, as he always did anywhere, the most gallant and distinguished person present, and he began in his clear and beautifully modulated voice by quoting the lines—'Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them.' 'I', said Tenniel, with just a touch of the engaging petulance he showed at times, 'am an example of the latter. I am amazed at this immense honour. Unhappily I have not the gift of words, but no words could express—' and here he suddenly stopped. I do not remember whether he had any notes, but I think he had relied on remembering what he had proposed to say, and, as happens to most who have not the power of thinking when on their legs in public, his mind suddenly became a blank.

There was a long silence, followed by encouraging applause, after which he tried again, and for the first time showed nervousness. Once more he came to a stop; there was a longer and more painful silence, and then he said in an audible aside to the chairman, 'It's no use. I can't go on,' and sat down.

Needless to say, Mr. Choate and other speakers

described these few sentences as being far more effective and touching than any eloquence could have been in the circumstances, and this was the case.

Nevertheless I am afraid that to the end of his life Tenniel was not free from disturbing memories of that evening, even though it did him nothing but honour.

But to impose upon an exceptionally modest man, who had probably never made a speech in public before in his life, the duty of replying to the most well-deserved compliments was, I cannot help thinking, mistaken kindness.

I remember that Mr. Choate on that occasion paid a humorous tribute to the letter-press of *Punch* by suggesting that Mr. Balfour was in the habit of reading that journal as a sure soporific when suffering from insomnia. But such bouquets were not infrequently thrown to the literary staff at that time, and by their own countrymen, so we bore up.

Later on in this volume I shall describe visits to and conversations with Tenniel in the closing years of his life.

I had known Linley Sambourne, as I had known Tenniel and du Maurier, for some years before I joined the *Punch* staff. I met him first, I think, at the George Boughtons' house on Campden Hill, when I remember he said to me, 'You ought to be one of us,' though I saw no probability of it at that time.

He was known to his intimates as 'Sammy', and was often the subject of always affectionate chaff. But as one of them remarked to me once, 'We treat Sammy as a sort of joke, but I'm hanged if I know why. He rides as well as most fellows, he's a first-rate shot, and a good skater, and he can hold his own at tennis or billiards!' Which was all perfectly true, but Sambourne would often deliver himself of the naïvest sayings, generally I think with full consciousness of their absurdity.

Some of his finest efforts fell from him during the

*Punch* dinners. I remember his ending a description of the scene after some great speech with 'There was such a silence afterwards that you could have picked up a pin in it'. And he would illustrate swiftness of flight by saying, 'It went like a swallow from the bow', and remark of some character who had been publicly exposed, 'He was left literally without a rag to stand on.' He would begin a question to Burnand with 'Oh, by the way, Frank—before I think of it——'. I think it was of some prominent person's exposure that he observed thoughtfully, 'Ah, you never can be sure of things what anybody's done.' Which, as I told him, I was much tempted to borrow for the refrain of a music-hall ditty.

When Partridge joined the staff he made weekly notes of Sambourne's *obiter dicta*, which he has placed at my disposal.

Here are some of them:

'Egypt was the crater of civilization.'

'Why, the army would be crushed to pieces like chaff before the wind.'

'You mustn't take me too *seriatim*.'

'The people who would once do the things in *Punch* that they do in every other paper won't do them nowadays' (when complaining of over-refinement in Mr. Punch's humour).

Of a certain painter's London studio, which he kept on but never occupied, 'There it is, like a white elephant round his neck!'

During an argument: 'You're digging nails in your own coffin with every stroke of your tongue!'

Of his work against time: 'I can tell you I've had to keep my nose to the gridiron!'

'Whenever I'm in Paris I always go for a walk in the morning down what I call the Champs Elysées.'

Of a triumphant acquittal: 'He came off with blowing drums and flying trumpets.'

Of a suggestion for a cartoon, 'Well, yes, that's a very good substratum to hang a picture on.'

Of an actress's 'Lady Macbeth', 'I didn't care for her in the street-walking scene.'

Of a successful novel: '*Called Back* experienced the greatest sensation that any other book ever caused.'

'Have you ever seen Lincoln Cathedral? No? Well, I assure you it's worth going there—all the way—to see the Cathedral. It's simply full of Architecture!'

In recommendation of a book he had enjoyed: 'You open the first page, and you can't put the book down. It's a novel pure and simple!'

After the Millais Exhibition: 'There was that picture of Sir Isinglass at the Ford.'

'Now this is a savoury pure and simple.' 'What do you mean by a savoury pure and simple, Sammy?' 'Well, soft roes on herrings.'

'He was trembling like an aspic.'

'It's so sour it sets your feet on edge. His gorge rolled at it.'

Of relations who were at Pisa at the time: 'I expect they'll be leaning up against the Tower.'

On the political situation: 'Chamberlain is the one strong man on both sides.'

'That's a mere flea in the ocean.'

'You'll be running your head into a mare's nest.'

Of a story at his own expense: 'There never was a snowball that had so many excrescences on it as that story!'

'When I was in Athens, I went out to see the Apocalypse by moonlight.'

'I see Blank's been splashing about again—stirring up oil in troubled waters.'

'It's like looking for an eagle in a bundle of hay.'

'The railway companies are only holding their heads above water by the skin of their teeth.'



Definition of a friend: 'A man who knows all about you, but likes you just the same.'

Some of these bulls would seem to indicate that Sammy had Irish blood in him, and he may have had for anything I know to the contrary. He was a vivacious talker, expressing himself in the first words that occurred to him, and when they resulted in bulls or malapropisms, I believe he was as delighted as any of us, for he was by no means as simple as he liked to appear, being really both shrewd and observant.

I have never met any one who so obviously enjoyed the mere fact of living as Sammy; to be his guest, or a fellow guest with him at a country house, was always a delight—he made the world seem pleasanter for the time being.

He was something of a *bon vivant*, having a fine taste in wine and a keen appreciation of good cooking, as his dinner-parties showed. I recollect a characteristic remark of his to Tenniel in this respect. Tenniel, when riding down a lane, had been bitten on the wrist by a fly which had just been feeding on a long-dead rabbit. As a consequence his arm had swollen badly, and as he told Sammy he had felt extremely ill for a day or two, after which he recovered. 'Ah,' said Sammy, 'it's lucky that didn't happen to *me*, or, living as I do, I should have died!'

But, although Sammy certainly lived well and enjoyed his food as he enjoyed most things, he was as a matter of fact moderate both in eating and drinking, and, thanks to the exercise he took, a healthy man until the last year of his life.

He loved his work; so long at least as he was free to choose his own subjects and exercise his very remarkable powers of fancy and invention in them. In later years, when he succeeded Tenniel as chief cartoonist and was required to carry out, not his own ideas, but those of his

colleagues, he naturally worked with less enjoyment, unless the subject happened to appeal to him particularly.

In his work as cartoonist, but not as illustrator of books, he depended to some extent on photographs, which he took himself from models whom he posed for his purposes.

In 1891, on the occasion of *Punch's* Jubilee, there was a special number with a cartoon by him representing the *Punch* staff at table, and each of us went singly to his house in Stafford Terrace, and sat at a little table in the garden in the position he required, while he took a photograph from the garden staircase.

He used to say that he had a cabinet containing photographs of every uniform in every European army, with countless others of costumes.

Furniss, who drew from models, would sometimes jeer at Sammy's reliance on photography, and in the first number of his *Lika Joco* referred to him as 'a slave of the camera'. But Sambourne was too fine and original a draughtsman to deserve that rather ill-conditioned taunt, and it is hardly necessary to say that his use of the camera was always legitimate and artistic.

If he was often laughed at, he was universally loved, as he was admired for a style and humour in draughtsmanship which were peculiarly his own.

I had already met du Maurier in the autumn of 1883 at Whitby, where he loved to spend his holidays with his wife and the children who so often figured in his *Punch* drawings. Trixie, the eldest daughter, was eighteen, and had just become engaged to Mr. Charles Millar, an extremely handsome young man who was frequently to be recognized in *Punch* at that period.

Then came Guy, who had just left school and was going into the Army, where he had a distinguished career in India, returned as colonel of his regiment at the begin-

ning of the Great War, and was killed by a shell a few weeks after he had been in France. Six years previously his play *An Englishman's Home*, written as a warning against the national neglect of military defence, had been produced at Wyndham's Theatre with brilliant success, and ran for several months.

Sylvia, then about sixteen, and giving little promise of the extraordinary beauty and charm she was to show later, and May, eleven or twelve, came next, and the youngest was Gerald, afterwards the gifted and popular actor-manager, who I think was eight or nine.

Sylvia married Arthur Llewellyn Davies, whose career at the Bar was cut short by death just when it had begun to be prosperous, and she did not long survive him. May also married, but, never very strong, gradually faded and died in 1928.

Walter and Phillip Frith, with whom I shared rooms at Whitby, were old friends of the du Mauriers, so that I spent the most part of every day with them, and with du Maurier in particular. There were cricket matches, which we watched together; in one of these we were amused by a stout little Yorkshireman with no small opinion of himself as a cricketer, who, after being bowled by the first ball, remarked indignantly: 'Ah'd á strooken on it if ah'd á hitten on it!'

There was an eleven composed entirely of clowns, too, who came over to play the Whitby visitors, and who whenever one of their opponents was bowled, caught, or run out, expressed their satisfaction by turning somersaults. Du Maurier told me afterwards that his youngest daughter May had drawn his attention to a conveyance with 'Father, do you see *that*?' 'Yes, what about it?' 'Why,' said May, with hushed reverence, 'that's *the Waggonette the Clowns came in!*'

At the Spa Theatre one evening, during the performance

of a little one-act musical piece called *The Loan of a Lover*, we were given an example of the method of improvising dialogue to cover a stage 'wait'.

The heroine, whose name I think was Gertrude, had just been asked by a Dutch lieutenant, whether a phlegmatic young Dutchman, Peter Spyk, was not one of her admirers. 'Oh no,' she had replied, 'Peter never thinks of me.'

This was the cue for her song with that title, but unfortunately, as she immediately discovered, the orchestra, consisting of an elderly man at the piano and a small boy with a violin, were not in their places. So she repeated in a louder tone for their benefit: 'Peter never thinks of Me!' They were evidently out of hearing, for nothing happened. So the lieutenant gallantly came to the rescue, 'Did I understand you to say,' he asked, 'that Peter never thinks of you?'

'No,' she said, 'Peter never thinks of me.'

He replied that he was astonished to hear it.

'But it's quite true,' Gertrude assured him. 'Peter goes into the village and he talks to all the girls in the village, but he never thinks of me.'

'Do you really mean to tell me that Peter goes into the village,' he replied incredulously, 'and talks to all the girls in the village and never thinks of you?'

'Yes,' she said, 'Peter does go into the village and talks to all the girls in the village, but he never thinks of me.' She was keeping an anxious eye on the place where the orchestra should have been, but it was still unoccupied.

'Well,' said the lieutenant, 'if any one but you had told me I could not have believed that Peter would go into the village and talk to all the girls in the village and never think of you.'

Gertrude replied that she knew it must seem strange but it was a positive fact that Peter did, &c., &c.

The orchestra still remained absent but both Gertrude

and the lieutenant seemed to think that Peter as a subject of conversation was exhausted. So after a pause the lieutenant said, 'Well. It's a fine day.' Fortunately the two members of the orchestra returned guiltily at this moment and Gertrude said with heartfelt indignation, 'Peter never thinks of me', and got her song at last.

A circus visited the town and of course we attended one of the performances. The programme concluded with a grand spectacular representation of the Zulu War, and I remember two members of the troupe who impersonated Lieutenants Melvill and Coghill riding into the arena on spotted circus horses and one remarking to the other, 'Well, Cog'ill, 'ere we are in the 'Art o' Zululand.'

To which Coghill replied: 'Yes, Melvill, but me 'art misgives me. 'Tis a unjust war!'

War as conducted in a circus arena can never be an impressively lurid affair, and I doubt if its horror was brought home to any of the audience by that particular performance. But it was none the less enjoyable for that.

The Alfred Scott-Gattys, Russell Lowell, then the American Minister, George W. Smalley, the London Correspondent of the *New York Herald*, and his family were all friends of the du Mauriers, and often took part in our expeditions, rows up the Esk to Ruswarp or Goathlands, and walks across the moors.

I retain a memory of Lady Scott-Gatty singing 'Bendemeer Stream' and her husband's negro ditties in her charming voice to us as we lay up in boats under the bank.

To come back to the *Punch* Table, du Maurier did not affect to be interested in the discussion of the cartoon, to which he had now and then to be recalled from private conversation by Burnand.

When the treatment was finally settled du Maurier would sometimes say: 'Well, now all you clever old Cockalorums have finished the cartoon, let's talk about

big dogs.' He loved them, and always had a St. Bernard in his house, beautiful and gentle animals they were, but shorter lived than other breeds.

I used often to call for him at New Grove House, Hampstead, and we would walk round the Heath together. He was a fascinating talker, often with a wistful melancholy that was always relieved by humour.

I remember his description of a boating excursion somewhere up the Thames with a party of friends of his own age and of his sudden discovery that all of them had grey hair. 'Somehow', he said, 'I hadn't realized till then that we weren't young any longer.'

He told me with great enjoyment how he had once been presented to a *grande dame* who was anxious to know about the weekly dinners at Bouverie Street, and after he had satisfied her curiosity, remarked: 'I see. They give you your dinner, and you do your little sketches in return.'

While he was writing *Peter Ibbetson*, he expressed to me one Wednesday night at the Table his consciousness that he was a mere amateur, but of course, as I reminded him, the mere invention of the legends for his drawings had been a literary training in itself, and besides he had already written the pseudo-Rossettian 'Legend of Camelot' and 'The Story of the Jack Spratts' for *Punch*.

His second novel, *Trilby*, brought him fame in a new *métier*, and, when the story was dramatized, a fortune as well.

Henry James, I heard from du Maurier, came up to New Grove House after *Trilby* had become the talk of the town, and invited him to come for a walk. 'Let us', said Henry James, 'find a seat and sit down and endeavour—if it is in any way possible to arrive at a solution—to discover some reason for such a phenomenon as the success of *Trilby*.'

There were very few contemporary novelists of whose methods Henry James really approved. It was mainly the

subjective side of an experience that interested him, and I fancy any direct and unqualified statement of fact in a novel always struck him as crude, and to be avoided if possible.

*The Martian*, which du Maurier believed—I am afraid mistakenly—to be his best work, was not published until after his death, but I remember his telling me an idea he had for a story which, as he would have written it, seemed to me to have great possibilities.

It began with an old couple sitting on either side of the fire in an old house at Malines. They had never left their native city, but now, in their old age, both were longing to travel and see the countries which they had hitherto only known from books. But this their age and scanty means made impossible for them.

In the room in which they sat were two large stuffed birds—pelicans, I think—and, by some means which either du Maurier did not explain or I have forgotten, the old couple were to transport their souls into the bodies of these birds and fly away into distant lands. The story was to consist of their adventures and perils, and with the drawings he would have made for it would have had the charm and fascination that all his imaginative work possessed, but it remained an idea only. At one time he suggested that I should undertake it, but I felt there were difficulties which I could not see my way to overcoming, and certainly no one but he could have made so fantastic a story at all plausible.

I doubt if he had any great liking for Society, but—mainly for the sake of his work—he went out a great deal during the Season with his wife and elder daughters, which enabled him to seize the latest fashionable craze or catchword and immortalize it in *Punch*.

He was about the same height as Alma Tadema though slimmer in figure, and they both wore their hair in much the same way, so that, while there was no real

resemblance between them, each was occasionally mistaken for the other, and du Maurier related to me with great satisfaction how a gushing lady had approached him at an evening party with: 'Oh, Mr. Tadema, I simply *must* tell you how much I admire your work—the wonderful way you paint marble—and'—&c., &c. To which, taking advantage of Tadema's weekly 'At Homes' and his pronounced Dutch accent, du Maurier had warmly replied: 'Com to me on my Djuesdays!'

Under all his humorous enjoyment of human follies and foibles there was always an underlying melancholy, and this was not to be wondered at, for from the time he was a young man he had worked under the constant dread of becoming totally blind at any moment. He described to me how he woke up one morning when he was a student and discovered that he could not see, how he spent many dreary weeks with bandaged eyes in a house at Malines, until gradually he recovered the use of one eye, though that of the other was lost.

Even the sight of the remaining eye was only partial; there was always, as he told me, a sense of a shutter closing a third of the view, and whenever he was out of health this shutter would seem to advance.

There was a time after I knew him when he began to paint in water-colour with great delight. I saw some of his drawings, and they were charming in their rendering of textures and surfaces. But he soon found that painting had a dangerous effect on his eyesight, and was advised that he must abandon it. Later still, his sight became so much worse that he could only draw at all on a much larger scale, but I think this was only a temporary attack, and that after it he could see as well as he had ever seen during the rest of his life.

But few men could have had the courage and perseverance to work at all under such a threat—still less to preserve any gaiety or sense of humour.



Fortunately the blow, imminent as it always was, never actually fell, and in his later years he not only found a fresh resource in writing, but achieved a dual fame as author and artist in England and the United States which he lived just long enough to enjoy.

Charles Keene I met for the first time at the Table. He was a tall thin man with iron-grey hair parted in the middle and curling into slight horns at the temples, and rather rugged features, clean shaven except for a moustache; silent as a rule, and not showing any marked interest in the discussion of cartoons which were too Liberal for his tastes as a strong Conservative.

There was nothing in his look or manner that indicated the humorist he was, for though he would occasionally accompany some remark with a portentous wink, the remark itself was never even intended as a witticism, and on the few occasions on which he attempted a story he made so many corrections and wandered into such by-paths that he never managed to arrive at the point. Except once, and that was when he told us a long story about a Bakewell pudding, and the point, when he at last produced it, was so extraordinarily feeble that it was received with a roar of laughter as a triumph of futility. I think Keene concluded that it must be even a better story than he had imagined.

He was the opposite of Sambourne, in that he had no palate for either food or wine, nor could he have much for tobacco, for, though he was a continual smoker of short clay pipes of an Elizabethan size and pattern, he always saved the burnt residue of tobacco, which he called 'dottels', for future consumption.

He was musical, but, so far as I know, the only instrument he played was the bagpipes. He lived all his life in the simplest and most economical manner—not because he was at all miserly but because he had absolutely no

expensive tastes, and it was a surprise when he died to find that he had left upwards of seventy thousand pounds.

With all his reserve and quiet eccentricity, Keene was kind and friendly and had many friends who loved him. As an artist, he was one of the very few black-and-white humorous draughtsmen whose work was known and admired on the Continent.

Harry Furniss was the other black-and-white artist when I joined the staff. He was an admirable mimic, and I remember his giving a life-like representation of Henry Irving playing, or rather about to play, a match at billiards for a hundred up. His opponent played first and, as his break proceeded, Irving was shown to be more and more agitated, nervously chalking his cue and calling out for 'more churk' as the score grew. Until his opponent ran out, and Irving collapsed with a tragic groan.

Furniss's parliamentary caricatures, and particularly his *Lika Joko* series, were a great feature in *Punch*, and contributed greatly to the success of the paper. It was regrettable that he should have left it as he did, on *Punch's* account, and more particularly his own, for he never again found so suitable a vehicle for his genius, and he was without the experience or training that makes a successful editor.

E. J. Milliken was the literary handy-man; quiet, pleasant, and modest, it was his job to furnish verse to accompany the cartoon, and his verse, though not inspired, was always scholarly and competent. In his 'Arry' series, however, he let himself go with great effect, and it was very popular at the time.

Gil and Arthur à Beckett, sons of the magistrate and author of *The Comic History of England* and *Comic History of Rome*, did the lighter articles, burlesque adver-

tisements, and so forth in *Punch*. Gil was the elder, and had begun to fail in health. He and Arthur together wrote an extremely funny burlesque Christmas story for *Punch* about this time with some such title as 'The Secret of Deadman's Terrace', but I cannot recall any other contribution of theirs.

Both had written successful little plays for the German Reeds at the Gallery of Illustrations, but that was before my time.

Arthur à Beckett was sub-editor—a light-hearted person who had never taken literature or much else very seriously. He told me once that he and Montague Williams had agreed to write a serial together, each to furnish alternate chapters, which serial I think actually appeared or began to appear in some journal. But as soon as Williams introduced an important character in one of his chapters, Arthur promptly disposed of him by an accident or murder in one of *his*, and Williams retaliated by wiping out one of Arthur's characters. So that the serial, though it could not have been wanting in incident, never really got started and came to a premature end for lack of principals.

Whether this was actually true or not I cannot say, but it would have been quite in keeping with Arthur's character. He once, as he informed me, began a 'sensation novel' with the sentence: 'The murderer paused in his bloody work,' without having at the time the faintest notion who the murderer was or how or why he had committed his crime.

In Burnand's *Happy Thoughts* there is a chapter in which the narrator is induced to adopt a comic make-up and disguise and presented to a country-house party, which only regards him with pity. The real victim was, as he told me himself, Arthur à Beckett, and his victimizers, the leader of whom was Burnand, made his situation more acute by affecting astonishment at such

extraordinary conduct. However, I doubt if Arthur was much discomposed by the experience.

Another member of the staff was Percival Leigh, and I am not sure that he was more than a member by courtesy; he had been a contributor from the very early, if not the earliest, days of *Punch*, and was the author of *The Comic Latin Grammar*, which I believe had a success in its day.

He still sent in contributions which Burnand, after cutting them down to reasonable lengths, occasionally inserted, but he took little part either in the conversation or the discussions at the Table, except that now and then he would suggest a quotation from Shakespeare of which he had a remarkable verbal memory. He had a noble head, and would have been an impressive figure if he had paid more attention to his personal appearance. For no other reason I could discover except that he had once been a medical student but had never practised as a doctor, he was always called 'the Professor'. We liked him, and he was treated with the greatest consideration at our gatherings, but he was little more than a pathetic shadow of what he probably had been some thirty years earlier.

Henry Lucy (afterwards Sir Henry) wrote the descriptive sketches of Parliament while it was in session, and his comments were both dreaded and courted by ambitious members. At the *Punch* Table he was always an unerring authority on what measure would be occupying the House a week in advance; he was intimate with the leaders on both sides of the House, and for that matter with most of the men who were prominent in Finance, the Bar, Medicine, or the Stage. He entertained liberally, and at his luncheons or dinners in his flat at Ashley Gardens one could always be sure of meeting celebrities in most of the professions. Lord Russell, the Chief Justice, Sir Frank

Lockwood, Irving, and Charles Wyndham were frequent guests there. Lucy was witty in a quiet dry way, with a thorough knowledge of Parliamentary intrigues and manoeuvres which made him a power.

In appearance he was short, with a pale complexion and a profusion of soft grey hair which rose in a high crest unlike any other person's hair.

Phil May, who wore his plastered flat in a fringe reaching to about an inch from his eyebrows, did a drawing of Lucy and himself after an exchange of coiffures, each remarking on the oddity of the other's hair. But Lucy's, at any rate, was beyond all control from Art.

Phil May joined the *Punch* staff in 1895, but was never a regular attendant at the Wednesday dinners, though he often put in an appearance for an hour or two later, while his hansom waited for him at the door. He was making a magnificent income at the time, and he spent it royally—mostly on his Bohemian friends, for he was extraordinarily generous, never refused a request for a loan, and was never of course repaid.

One of these gentry once hailed him with 'I say, Phil, I'm on the rocks—can you let me have fifty pounds?' 'I'm sorry, old man,' said Phil, 'I've only got twenty, if that will do.' 'All right,' said the other as he took the notes. 'And don't forget now—you owe me thirty.' And he left Phil firmly convinced that he was in the other's debt to that amount.

I don't remember that he ever took much part in the discussion of the cartoons, but he occasionally told us some experiences of his. One was of his having been commissioned by some paper to go out to one of the Dominions—I forget which—with a journalist of the name of George, whose articles Phil was to illustrate.

For some reason their expedition had not produced any very satisfactory results, and they returned in the summer

of 1893 by no means looking forward to their reception by the proprietors of the paper they represented.

They reached London and were driving down Fleet Street, which was decorated for the wedding of the late King and Queen Mary. 'And I saw', said Phil, 'that there were banners everywhere with "Welcome to George and May" on them, and I said: "It's all right—we're forgiven!"'

One evening at the *Punch* Table a beetle had appeared from the fruit at dessert, and after being hospitably entertained with a drop or two of port by one of the party, was steering a very erratic course over the table-cloth. On which Phil, with evident fellow feeling, remarked: 'He'll catch it from his missis when he gets home!'

Phil's appearance was striking; his head was rather higher at the back than in front, and he wore his black hair in a low fringe that left little of his forehead visible above the eyebrows; his face was deadly pale when I first knew him, the nose slightly aquiline and the mouth wide, thin lipped, and when in repose, sardonic, though his smile was pleasantly engaging. Curiously enough, his features exactly resembled those of the then Pope, Leo the Thirteenth, a resemblance of which Phil was distinctly proud. He once showed me a photograph of himself, on which he had painted out the fringe and pasted pontifical robes, and it had become an unmistakable portrait of His Holiness.

In after-life he came to be very much as his friend and neighbour Sir James Shannon represented him. It was a painfully realistic portrait, but Phil was highly satisfied with it. 'Shannon's sending in a portrait of me to the R.A.', he told us at the Table, 'which will make all the others look like tripe!' It certainly did not make poor Phil look in the least like tripe.

He was a fine horseman, and in his long skirted grey coat and generally neat turn-out he looked his best in the saddle.

His untimely death was deeply felt by all his colleagues, and was of course a heavy loss to *Punch*. Phil May was another English black-and-white draughtsman whose work was as much admired across the Channel as by his countrymen.

My salary as a member of the staff was no more than three guineas a week at first, but this, as Burnand put it, was a kind of retaining fee; I was not required to send in weekly contributions but merely short articles whenever an idea for one occurred to me that would be suitable to *Punch*.

As it happened, however, I had not been long at the Table before I began to contribute weekly. There was a meeting of the Unemployed in Trafalgar Square which I thought might give me a subject, and it did. I described what I saw and heard there, in dialogue form, under the title 'Voces Populi', which served for a series of similar sketches. While in the Square, by the way, I had noticed a body of roughs surging past the National Gallery and into Cockspur Street, and on going down Pall Mall an hour or so later, I found nearly all the shop fronts in Pall Mall smashed, and being hastily boarded up. It was not till I saw the evening paper that I learned that the mob had looted all the jewellers' shops on their route, swept up St. James's Street, along Piccadilly, and into the Park, where they pulled the astonished footmen off the boxes of landaus and barouches, and insulted the occupants, who naturally thought that the day of Revolution had come. I was told by some one who was in one of these carriages that one of the ruffians had looked in at the window and, seeing a girl inside, had remarked, ' 'Ere, as you're so pretty, you can 'ave this!' with which he flung a diamond bracelet into her lap and moved on.

After a brief pandemonium a strong force of mounted constables arrived and the demonstrators disappeared as

suddenly as they had broken into Hyde Park Corner, but it must have been some time before the stately coachmen and footmen recovered their usual impassive dignity.

It need hardly be said—and it was the point of my article—that the genuine unemployed took no part in all this violence; they merely listened more or less apathetically to the speeches from the base of Nelson's Column, while the scum of London took advantage of the opportunity.

My father was never quite reconciled to my joining *Punch*, and often told me that it was a great mistake. And there was a remark by some journalist that was reported to me to this effect: 'There's Anstey—he wrote *Vice Versâ*, which was cracked up for more than it was worth. Then he writes *The Giant's Robe*, twice as good, and every one runs it down. And just see what he's come down to now—*writin' for "Punch"!*'

But I felt then, as I have always felt, that it was no small distinction to be connected with what is admittedly the greatest humorous paper in the world, and I never had the least doubt that I should be the gainer by it.

As a matter of fact, the work occupied only a small part of my time, and I enjoyed it immensely. Burnand left me a perfectly free hand, but complimentary tickets for all manner of queer shows and entertainments used to be sent to *Punch* at that time, and he always passed them on to me, with a suggestion that they might provide a subject for a 'Voces'. Sometimes they did, though more often they didn't, but it was all experience.

Then I learnt to condense to some extent, and to tell a story by means of dialogue, but for which I should never have become a playwright.

I soon found that three guineas a week was not a sufficient remuneration for the work I was doing, and represented this to Burnand; he entirely agreed and represented as much to the proprietors, who raised my 'retaining fee'



at first to four guineas, and subsequently to six and seven, until, for the last years in which I received a regular salary, it was ten guineas a week.

In 1897 I found the strain of providing almost weekly contributions too much for me, and resigned my weekly salary, on the understanding that I should be paid ten guineas for any article I contributed, while I retained my seat at the *Punch* Table. And for some years afterwards my income from *Punch* was not more than a hundred pounds or so less than when it had been a fixed one.

My 'Voces Populi' were not in most cases conversations which I overheard and reported verbatim. Generally in any gathering I was in I would catch one or two remarks which would give me the key-note for a character, and enable me to judge how he or she would react to the various exhibits. Occasionally I am afraid I chose representative types and relied on the circumstances to provide them with suitable comments. But I think my characters, observed or evolved, did give a not untrue rendering of the social life of the period, and that this invests the sketches with a certain historical interest nowadays, if with no other.

Sometimes I had the good fortune to come across an incident which required little more than faithful description. I went to the Crystal Palace one Bank Holiday, and came back in an overcrowded compartment with, as one of my fellow travellers, a noisy and far from sober ruffian, whose ditties and remarks I noted down under his drunken nose. In a third-class compartment I heard a conversation between another beery ruffian and a smug shopkeeper of some kind, which needed nothing but compression to make an effective 'Voces'.

And once when I had cycled out to the old 'King's Head' at Chigwell—the 'Maypole' of Barnaby Rudge—and was lunching in an arbour on the pleasant bowling green, I found I was assisting at a meeting of a club whose

proceedings struck me as so irresistibly comic that I not only listened (which indeed unless I had abandoned my lunch or stopped my ears I could hardly have avoided) but made use of them in a 'Voces' which I called 'A Meeting of the Penguin Club'. That I need not say was not the actual name of the club, and I altered the ridiculous formalities as well as other details. But I am afraid it was an unpardonable act of mine nevertheless, though for the life of me I could not resist the temptation of making copy out of those unconscious 'Penguins'. I comfort myself by the reflection that most probably not one of them ever saw my article, and that there was nothing in it to hurt his feelings if he did. At times I have pleased myself by imagining that they all read it, and that each suspected the other of being the author. But I should not like to think that I am responsible for breaking up that club. From what I saw of them it would not have taken much to do it.

And there was a dialogue between a Good and a Bad brother at an Italian restaurant, which I incorporated in a 'Voces' exactly as I heard it. But this, too, was not likely to meet the eye of either brother, and if it had, the Bad one's withers would not have been wrung—he was much too drunk to retain any recollection of that interview.

Another incident, of which I gave an absolutely exaggerated description in a 'Voces' which I called 'The Cadi of the Curbstone', was a dispute between a cabman and a highly respectable but extremely intoxicated elderly gentleman close by the Albert Hall, and the settlement of the case by an impartial constable.

The old gentleman was induced at last to give his name and address, but naturally I substituted fictitious ones in my sketch, and though he might for all I knew have been a reader of *Punch*, he probably only congratulated himself on having comported himself with a dignity and sobriety that were deplorably lacking in the other old gentleman in my 'Voces'.

I heard many things which, for want of opportunity or other reasons, I did not make use of in a 'Voces'.

Once on a bicycle ride out of London I came upon a crowd which was hotly discussing which of two drivers was to blame for colliding with the other's vehicle. A solemn onlooker was delivering his judgement in favour of one driver and addressing him in the following cryptic sentence: 'It's not as if there was anything between you and the 'orse to object to 'im.' What on earth he intended to convey in these amazing words, and whether he knew himself what he meant, I never discovered. But the crowd accepted them as a decision worthy of Solomon himself, so I suppose they must have had some meaning.

After a bulletin outside Marlborough House had announced the lamented death of the Duke of Clarence, I was walking up Oxford Street. There the news had already reached, and in all the big drapers' shops the coloured goods were being hastily removed from the windows, bales of black cloth substituted, and shutters put up.

In front of me were a young Cockney clerk and his fiancée, and as we passed the great Mourning Depot at the corner of Oxford Circus he remarked to her, 'Jay's can larf at 'em all!'

About the end of the seventies or the beginning of the eighties a farcical comedy called *Nita's First* was running at the Vaudeville. As might be expected from the title the plot was closely concerned with a baby, and so, to advertise the play, a string of unhappy sandwich men paraded the Strand, each of whom carried a large doll dressed in long clothes.

I happened to be on the pavement opposite Charing Cross station one afternoon when the driver of a bus, being in a humorous mood, flicked his whip at the last doll in the procession and passed on, quite unaware that his lash had caught the sandwich man in the eye.

Whereupon the sandwich man, mad with pain and desirous of revenge, rushed after the bus and pinched the conductor (who, as usual in those days, was standing on a little perch by the bus door) savagely in the leg.

The conductor promptly called a constable and demanded that the sandwich man should be taken up for assault, while the latter complained bitterly of the injury to his eye. The policeman preserved a judicial calm. 'Well, and if the driver did hit you in the eye,' he said, 'that ain't no reason why you should go and pinch the poor devil of a conductor's leg, is it?' But, to the sandwich man's mind, it evidently seemed a perfectly reasonable proceeding, and eventually, after a good deal of argument, the bus was ordered to drive on, and the bearer of the doll to rejoin his fellow nursemaids.

I must have described this incident to my friend Barry Pain, for it appeared in one of his amusing 'De Omnibus' sketches.

But I had already used it myself in an essay 'Some Detached Thoughts on Omnibuses' which, at Andrew Lang's request, I contributed to a St. Andrews University production entitled *Alma Mater's Mirror*, published in 1887.

I like railway travelling, but while I do not consider myself a particularly unsociable person, I cannot remember ever having been the first to enter into conversation with a fellow traveller. On the whole I much prefer to journey in silence, though I have not always found this a protection.

On one occasion I was starting from King's Cross by a night train to the North. There was only one other passenger in my compartment, a man in the middle thirties who looked like a commercial traveller, and who was taking a sentimental leave of a much younger and not unattractive young woman, apparently his fiancée, at the carriage door.

I could not avoid overhearing some of their conversation; she said, 'I wish I was going with you!' To which he replied with intense feeling, 'I wish to God you were!' And as the train started, he leaned out of the window and adjured her in solemn tones, as Charles the First did Bishop Juxon, to 'Remember! Remember!' which sounded to me rather like a warning against encouraging rival admirers.

Then he sank back in his corner with a sigh, and I sat in my own corner at the opposite end, fully aware that he was dying to talk to me about the object of his affections, and wondering how he would lead up to her. He did it in this way: 'It's a lovely night, sir, is it not?' he remarked. I agreed that it was a lovely night.

'The moon shines so bright that you can distinguish every object almost as clear as if it was day,' he went on.

I agreed with him again.

'That is,' he said, 'I can myself. But I see you wear glasses!'

I admitted this.

'I don't know whether you noticed that young lady I was saying good-bye to,' he proceeded. '*She* wears glasses, *too*. But not out of *affectation*!'

And in a very short time I was given a full description of the young lady's many charms, even including her exact weight.

I forget what this was, except that, like her other attractions, it was not what one would have been led to expect.

No one will ever know the precise sentiments of the ducks on the Round Pond towards model steamers, but I saw one duck at least who evidently considered them a nuisance. It had come upon a fine battleship, its steam exhausted, drifting derelict, and had taken advantage of the opportunity to board it.

Having done so, the duck, with a deliberate intention

there could be no mistaking, shifted its weight to one side so as to bring the gunwale below the level of the water, and give the ship an increasing list.

Now and then it would flop off and inspect results, and then resume its efforts, until at last they succeeded, and the vessel sank, bows first, in a highly realistic manner. On which the duck swam off, and if ever I saw a duck thoroughly pleased with itself I saw one then.

As I have said earlier, I began to be a playgoer in my school-days, and by necessity for several years, and for many afterwards by preference, I saw most of my plays from a seat in the pit.

It was in the Lyceum pit that, not long after I had left Cambridge, I heard what I still consider a monumental criticism on *Hamlet*.

Behind me were two elderly women, one of whom had, I gathered, treated the other to the play. I think she had seen it before, for when Irving appeared I heard her explain in a hoarse whisper 'That's Amlick!' and, at the Queen's first entrance, 'That's 'is mother-in-law, that is!'

When the final curtain had fallen, she said to her friend, hoping, I think, for some expression of gratitude: 'Well, 'ow did yer like it?'

I had already concluded that the other lady had been rather bored by the play than otherwise, but of course it would not have been manners for her to admit it. So, after a little hesitation, she replied: 'Well, yer know, it—it's not what I call a *deep* pl'y.'

Her standard of Tragedy was evidently a somewhat exacting one.

In the Vaudeville pit I once sat next to a simple old soul who visited a theatre rarely but seemed anxious to impress me with the fact that the Drama had no secrets for *him*. He also appeared to have an impression that I was a complete stranger to its mysteries, for when the

orchestra struck up he drove his elbow hard into my ribs, and said, 'This is the hoverture, Mister,' for which I thanked him. When the opening farce was over, he drove me in the ribs again and explained, 'That was the *first* Act, that was!' and again I intimated my gratitude.

The play of the evening was called *Confusion*, and he continued to interpret its action to me, 'E's the 'ero, 'e is, and she 's the 'eroine. Them two are in love, they are!' (They were not, as a matter of fact.) 'Did yer see that? 'E's dropped 'is letter on the floor. Now you wait—some 'un 'll come on and pick it up in a minute—you see if they don't!' And when this prophecy was fulfilled, he dug me in the ribs again and said: 'There! What did I tell yer!' All of which I bore with patience.

Then came a scene of misunderstanding, during which he whispered, 'D'ye see 'ow it is, *sbe* thinks 'e's a torkin' about a pug dorg, and 'e thinks she's a torkin' about a byby!' And then I was driven to ask him if he would mind not talking, as I could follow the play without his assistance.

I said so quite politely, but the effect on him was such that I almost regretted my protest. Every now and then he was seized with the desire to enlighten my ignorance, but as often restrained it, and spared my ribs, hugging himself tightly instead, and murmuring, as some relief to his feelings: 'Confusion, hey? *Confusion!*' till the play ended.

Once, in the pit at Wyndham's Theatre many years later, I could hardly avoid hearing a conversation between two unseen persons just behind me—a conversation which I found of such interest that I own to making no effort to divert my attention elsewhere.

I never saw either of the speakers, but voices and remarks can be very informing at times, and I deduced from them that he was a self-important and solemn person, possibly a manager in some City business, that she

was his wife, or possibly his sister and a lady of great gentility (she remarked 'Well, I never thought to find myself in the *Pit*!'); that they had a house in one of the suburbs, and a relative—whether his or her brother, I did not gather—who was referred to as 'Charlie', and who was not as steady as he should have been; that one of their neighbours had given a highly select garden party, and that 'Charlie' had been one of those invited to it.

'There was I,' said the husband (whom I pictured as a stoutish man with a walrus moustache—he sounded like that kind of person), 'there was I, waiting for him from 5.30, and he never turned up till past 7. And when he did—it was most unfortunate. But he *would* go to the party all the same!'

'The wonder was,' said the lady, 'you went with him, seeing the condition he was in.'

'Well,' replied the husband, by way of excuse, 'he *said* Mr. Jorkins up the road had asked him in to have a tiddly. But they'd nearly all gone by the time we got there. There was little more than the family. George may say what he likes, but that's all there was of them. Where Charlie went afterwards History telleth not, but he didn't get home till one o'clock.'

'And I suppose—' from the lady, 'they'd all gone to bed.'

He: 'No, they had not. It was most unfortunate. But Charlie don't care. Goes up to George, and says "how-de-do". Asks after Eugenie. And he's only been asked to tea there twice! That I *know*. I never ask after Eugenie *myself*! And George sits there and casts looks at me!'

She: 'I shouldn't have thought he'd want to cast looks at *you*.'

He: 'Well, *balf* looks.'

He then went out to get a little fresh air, after which he returned and told his companion in a tone thick with



self-complacency, 'Just seen Sir Chawles and Mary Moore drive up in their motor-broom. Of the latest! Of—the—latest!'

I am sure this experience added to his enjoyment of their Art.

At a theatre I also heard social disapproval expressed in fewer and more innocuous words than I had thought possible. A lady near me was asked if she had met Miss Blank, who was appearing in the principal part. 'No,' she said, and added after a pause, 'I *could* have.'

## IX

1882-1889

**I**F I describe, as I propose to do, the origin and fortunes of each of my books in some detail, it will not be because I have an exaggerated idea of their importance. If I had ever had that, the fact that until 1931 only two of them, viz. *Vice Versâ* and *A Fallen Idol*, had appeared for years past in the printed lists of any publisher would have sufficiently disabused me.

But I think the account may be of some value and interest as showing how an exceptional success is no guarantee of any continued popularity, or even more than a very fluctuating income.

In my own case I was never, fortunately for myself, absolutely dependent on what I made by writing, nor have I, unlike so many better authors, ever felt the least anxiety about money matters.

But if I had not had a private income later in life, if I had put nothing by when I was making a fair professional income, and especially if I had married and had a family, my present position would not afford much encouragement to any one who might be thinking of authorship as a career.

It might, of course, be said that it is hardship of all kinds which develops a writer's powers. It may be so in most cases, for all I can say, but if I know anything of myself, it would have been fatal to such talent as I possessed. I could no doubt have written to order and against time, but it would never have been with enjoyment or spontaneity. By writing to please myself and only when I felt I could do my best, I may not have pleased more than a few. As a hack I should have pleased none.

Not that I was idle, I loved writing too well to neglect

it long, so well that I seldom wrote anything less than three times, often for the pleasure of finding fresh touches to be added to passages that I had enjoyed writing, and perhaps were better without them.

I had shown James Payn the outline for a novel which I first called *The Lion's Skin*, and later *The Giant's Robe*, and he had strongly recommended me to set to work on it at once, which I did. Also, with the idea of learning to draw well enough to illustrate my own work in black and white, I began to attend Calderon's Art School in Grove End Road.

Then, in August 1882, I went with Arthur Pearson for a walking tour in the Black Forest. We did very little walking, which made it all the pleasanter, and after seeing all we could of the Black Forest went by leisurely stages up the Rhine to Strasbourg.

The Speisesaal at our hotel at St. Goarhausen was patronized every evening by the local worthies, one of whom was a recognized humorist in a snuff-brown coat. He seemed to have only one joke and that was to pretend to fall down the three steps which led into the room. He invariably made his entrance in this way and must have hurt himself considerably over it. I fancy it had become an institution which he dared not depart from. But the waitress was pretty, so perhaps her laughter which was always forthcoming was a sufficient reward for his exertions. I have no doubt he fell down those steps regularly every night for the remainder of his life, unless the appreciative waitress was replaced by one who had no sense of humour. That, however, would have been a tragedy which I hope he may have been spared. His jest went extremely well on all the three evenings we were at St. Goarhausen.

During this tour we came upon the picturesque little towns of Gross and Klein Laufenburg on the Rhine between Basle and Schaffhausen, and I then decided that, if

ever I wrote my projected novel, I would use Laufenburg as a background for certain incidents.

On my return I resumed work at the Art School. But the training in those days was entirely with a view to entering the Royal Academy School, and consisted in teaching the art of copying plaster casts and figures by stippling in crayon and bread pills. I got as far as the Discobolos, but saw no prospect of ever being allowed to draw from living models.

So when in December James Payn told me that he was starting a new and illustrated series of *The Cornhill* in June, and wanted to open with *The Giant's Robe* as one of the serials, I felt that I should need all my time if I was to get even a few of the monthly instalments written in the next six months, and I left Calderon's accordingly.

For the remainder of 1882 and almost the whole of 1883 I was hard at work on *The Giant's Robe*. In the spring of '83 I went back to Laufenburg, where I was the only visitor at the Soulbad Hotel. It was not lively, but I wrote during the mornings and explored the surrounding country and made notes for 'local colour' in the afternoons.

In the winter of 1882 I had a proposal from Edward Rose to dramatize *Vice Versâ* and share any profits there might be from the venture.

He need neither have offered me a share nor asked my consent in those days, for any one was at liberty to dramatize a novel without the author's permission and for his own benefit. Mrs. Henry Wood's *East Lynne*, for instance, made over a million pounds for its various adaptors and producers, not a penny of which ever came to her.

So that I was very ready to accept what was really a handsome offer on Rose's part. His version was in two acts, and was produced at the old Strand Theatre in the summer of 1883, with Rose himself as Dick Bultitude,

Robert Brough as his father, and William Hawtrey as Dr. Grimstone. As it played for little over an hour it was followed by a burlesque by Warham St. Leger on *The Silver King*, called *Silver Guilt*.

The theatre had been taken for the purpose by Cowper Coles, a son of the commander who went down with the unfortunate *Captain*. I occasionally went behind of an evening while *Silver Guilt*, the main attraction, was being performed. Theatres in front and behind were then lit by gas, and I remember Cowper Coles telling me with horror one evening that he had just caught one of the chorus girls striking a match on the big meter in the wings to light her cigarette. Laura Linden, a clever and charming young actress, played the heroine in *Silver Guilt*, and Edward Righton burlesqued Wilson Barrett; Edward Bell, besides playing Tipping in *Vice Versâ*, was a kind of harlequin-detective in the burlesque, and I think William Hawtrey, the Dr. Grimstone, was also playing in *Silver Guilt*.

Rose was rather stouter than a normal boy of fourteen, but he was extremely funny as the transformed Paul, while 'Bill' Hawtrey was admirable as Grimstone; he said to me once at rehearsal, 'I'm not sure whether I shall make him like' (the head of a great public school whose name I forget) 'or my own father', who had been an Eton master. Eventually he decided on his father.

The version was well received, and the burlesque, which was above the average in wit and point, made a hit. The two pieces had a run of about a hundred and fifty performances, and so far as I can remember, Rose and I made that number of pounds each out of our share in the bill.

After the run was ended, Rose proposed that we should take *Vice Versâ* on tour, and as I was not in a position to undertake the financial risk myself, we agreed to have the dramatic rights valued by an independent person, Rose

to acquire them on paying me half of whatever they might be estimated at.

The estimate was fifty pounds, and I am glad to say that Rose toured the play for several years in the provinces and made quite a good thing out of it, as he well deserved.

Much later he dramatized Stanley Weyman's *Under the Red Robe*, and Sir Anthony Hope Hawkins's *Prisoner of Zenda* and *Rupert of Hentzau*, with such success that both their respective authors and Rose himself made large sums by his versions.

Once when I met Stanley Weyman at dinner at Rose's house, he delighted me by saying that it was while reading my short story 'The Black Poodle' that he first felt the desire to write—a statement which should have been enough to save it from oblivion, though it was not.

Rose was a most genial and humorous companion, and our friendship lasted until his death from heart disease in 1904. Shortly before he had lost a beloved daughter, and his grief for her undoubtedly hastened his own end.

Some time in 1883 I remember being introduced by Edward Rose to Byron Webber, the author of several novels on steeplechasing and cricketing subjects, and Byron Webber's remark to me was: 'Now you've got to show us you can write,' from which I gathered that he was very far from convinced of that as yet.

Nor was I for that matter, nor have I ever flattered myself that my literary style had much beyond lucidity to recommend it. If it was influenced by any other author it was probably George Eliot, and no writer could have finer models than *Felix Holt*, *Silas Marner*, or *The Mill on the Floss*. But I did not consciously try to imitate anything but her simplicity and restraint in narrative; the higher flights were beyond me, and much as I enjoy writing—even the manual act has always given me a

certain pleasure—I have seldom written without a hampering sense that my vocabulary was more limited than I could wish.

There have been times, it is true, when the right words came automatically and the phrases seemed by some miracle exactly what one required. But such times were rare compared to those when one sought in vain for an expression that was not a cliché. So I have often doubted whether I have ever really mastered the art of 'writing' in Mr. Byron Webber's sense.

I forget exactly when or how the idea for *The Giant's Robe* first occurred to me, but it may have been at some time in the early summer of 1882. It is always difficult to trace the origin of an idea, but that of *The Giant's Robe* was certainly not consciously suggested by any previous story. Whether the fact that James Payn thought for a time that Frith had written *Vice Versâ* had anything to do with it is more than I can say, for it is quite possible that the first notion of my second book came to me before my first was offered to Messrs. Smith & Elder.

I remember that, after *The Giant's Robe* had begun to take shape, I was a little troubled by a vague memory of a short story I had read somewhere, in which a student at some German university allowed himself to be supposed the author of a learned treatise which was really the work of another.

Was this story too much on the lines of mine or not? I decided that it was not, as the originality of a story depended on the treatment rather than the motive of it, and various fascinating ways of working out my plot were beginning to occur to me.

And indeed, unless an author had read no fiction at all, or could erase from his memory every story he had ever read, it would be difficult for him to feel sure that any idea of his was absolutely original.

I think that in those days at least, critics were rather apt to forget that there can be no copyright in ideas, and to detect plagiarism in quite accidental similarity.

As a matter of fact, deliberate plagiarism is very rare; a writer who had anything of the artist in him could not, even if he tried, slavishly follow the plot, characters, and incidents of another; he would inevitably take a line of his own—if only in self-protection.

So that surface resemblances in the works of two authors are actually proofs of innocence and not of guilt. Often they are due to nothing more than the fact that some ordinary experience has impressed two different writers in much the same way.

Charles Reade—distinctly a writer of genius—charged George Eliot, of all authors, with plagiarizing from him, and drew up a list of examples. One was that she had written of the ‘thunder’ of a wagon as it rolled over wooden planks. Another, that she had copied him in making Esther Lyon give evidence in court in defence of Felix Holt.

Obviously no one who had ever heard a wagon roll over a wooden bridge could describe the sound more accurately than as thunder, and it would be strange if the author who had first represented his heroine as going into the witness-box were entitled to prohibit all future novelists from introducing a similar incident. In fact it would not only be strange, but the principle, if established, would put an end to all imaginative fiction.

Of course there are isolated cases in which hack-writers who have exhausted what invention they may have had, or swindlers who never had any, have copied out existing stories, and, after merely altering the titles and names of characters, have sent them to editors as original compositions—a form of industry which, to my mind, is the only real plagiarism.

But it is not a little insulting to a writer of any position



to suggest that he or she could be guilty of anything approaching such dishonesty.

To return to *The Giant's Robe*: when I heard from Payn in November that he proposed to begin it in the new *Cornhill* in July 1883, I had only done about two-thirds of a rough version of the story, and knew that I could not possibly have it completed by that time. However, Payn was ready to rely on my having finished a sufficient number of instalments to start with, and I felt sure that nothing, short of unforeseen disablement, would prevent me from sending in the entire novel long before it was wanted.

By July 1883, when the first number of the new sixpenny *Cornhill* appeared, I think I had about eight instalments in hand, and had no difficulty in finishing the last with time to spare.

Still the necessity of publishing the beginning before the conclusion was written was not to the advantage of the book, and if I had been able to revise it before publication, I should probably have condensed the opening chapters.

A few years before the Great War a leading firm of publishers issued *The Giant's Robe*, by arrangement with Messrs. Smith & Elder and myself, in a sixpenny edition, and considered it necessary to cut out as many as six thousand words—which I thought, and still think, too severe an operation for any novel to undergo.

I wrote *The Giant's Robe* with much enjoyment, and took all possible care to consult authorities on any details of which I had no personal knowledge. I found that each new social experience was of some help to me, and it was a constant interest and delight to me to find my story expanding and developing as I wrote.

My method of writing fiction has always been the exact contrary of that which is recommended by experts on the Art. They tell you that you should first choose your characters, and then let them work out the story for

themselves. But I have always first thought of a plot, and then chosen the sort of characters who I considered would be best fitted to carry it out. This, I am aware, is quite inartistic, but it was the only way for me. Most authors have found that their characters insisted on taking their own course, regardless of their creator's original intentions. Mine never defied me—whether this was because I had them too thoroughly under control, or whether they had too little vitality to rebel, is a question I shall not attempt to decide.

At all events, I succeeded in making myself believe in them and their story, and unless an author can do this, he can never hope that any reader will find them credible.

I was under no illusion that *The Giant's Robe* was a masterpiece, nor did I expect that it would have the fortune of my first book. But I knew that Payn and one or two others who had seen it in proof thought well of it, and I looked forward to the appearance of the first instalment in the new *Cornhill* without any great misgivings.

However, when it did appear in July, I found that the inevitable penalty for sensational success had begun. The first number of the magazine, which consisted entirely of fiction, abundantly illustrated by du Maurier and others, was warmly welcomed by the Press generally, but my own contribution was pronounced to be a great disappointment, with a plot that was obvious from the beginning.

I had still some three or four instalments to write, but I did not find that these criticisms discouraged me particularly, or affected my belief in my story. I thought that, as subsequent numbers came out, it would be found that the treatment of the plot had some originality.

It was not till after several instalments—I forget how many—had appeared that I found I had deceived myself once more. The two chief society weeklies of that day had for some time been publishing paragraphs stating that *The Giant's Robe* was an impudent plagiarism from a

novel entitled *Tom Singleton, Dragoon and Dramatist*, by Follett Synge, and challenging me to deny it if I could.

I did not deny it, because I did not happen to be a reader of either journal, and so was quite unaware of the challenge, whereupon, as I discovered later, I was reminded that silence in certain cases was not golden but brazen.

But at last George Millar, who had just become engaged to my sister, told me of the paragraphs and I went at once to see James Payn about them. I had never, as I told him, read a line of *Tom Singleton*, or known till then that such a novel existed. Should I write to the editors, or put a note in the next *Cornhill* number, or what?

Payn advised me to take no notice for the present, but to deny the charge in a note on a fly-leaf to *The Giant's Robe*, when it was issued in volume form. This I did, but, as I understood that Mr. Follett Synge fully believed that I had stolen from his novel, I did not feel inclined to mention either it or him by name, and merely disclaimed all indebtedness to any previous work, with the possible exception of the short story about the German student.

I was mistaken, however, in thinking that I had cleared myself, for my preface was referred to by more than one critic as 'disingenuous', and my character as a plagiarist remained as firmly established as ever. So much so that many years later the writer of an article on 'The Ethics of Plagiarism', in *The Fortnightly Review*, genially observed that 'no one could possibly doubt that *The Giant's Robe* had been carefully quarried out of *Tom Singleton*'.

I have never dared to read that book to this day, but my friend Mr. Laurie Magnus has done so and tells me that there are striking similarities between it and my own.

I recognize now, though I neither knew nor should have cared about it then, that this most unfortunate resemblance must have done me a great deal of harm.

The public who had liked *Vice Versâ* had expected a successor on the same fantastic lines; instead of that they got a novel of ordinary middle-class life. That was bad enough, but when they were told that it was not even original, that I had shot my bolt with my first book and was now reduced to copying a work by some one else, a great many must have felt that their enthusiasm had been mistaken.

Messrs. Smith & Elder paid me about eight hundred pounds for the serial rights in *The Giant's Robe*. It was published in book form in 1884, and had a certain but by no means remarkable sale, certainly not one to be compared with that of *Vice Versâ*.

It was favourably noticed by some influential papers, but damned, if I remember rightly, by the *Atthenaeum* and *Academy*, though I did not see their reviews till years afterwards.

On the whole I had no reason to suppose it was an absolute fiasco, as it undoubtedly was not, and it had at least shown that I could rely on making a living by authorship.

Also George Smith had just given me as an act of grace five hundred pounds in addition to the fifty he had already paid for the copyright of *Vice Versâ*.

That book, by the way, there being no Anglo-American copyright at that time, had been issued by several American publishing firms, one of whom, Messrs. Appleton's, sent me a cheque for £30 in respect of their own sales. The other firms did not consider themselves under any such obligation, as indeed they were not. I felt myself bound, as I had parted with the copyright, to pass this cheque on to George Smith, who, with his usual generosity, insisted on my keeping it.

In 1884 I collected all the short stories I had written up to that time, and they were published in volume form under the title of *The Black Poodle* by Messrs. Longmans,

with a frontispiece by du Maurier, and vignettes drawn (very amateurishly) on the block by myself. The book was well reviewed, and went into two, if not three editions, but has long been out of print.

By the end of 1884, I had over a thousand pounds to my credit, most of which, on my father's advice, I invested, and opened an account at a bank with the remainder. I was making more than enough for my personal expenses, which, as I continued to live at home, were not heavy.

I could well afford to please myself in what I wrote next without troubling—which as a matter of fact I never have done—as to whether it would please the public or not. There was a story in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* of a ring placed on the finger of a statue of Venus, which had long struck me as a possible subject for a modern fantasy. I tried it, and found it amused me, at all events, and finished it early in 1885.

J. W. Arrowsmith of Bristol had begun a series of shilling stories with the enormously successful *Called Back* by Hugh Conway, and Messrs. Longmans had just published Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in a shilling volume, so I thought of publication at the same price for *The Tinted Venus*. I sent it first to Messrs. Longmans, but I knew nothing of publishing conditions, and so calculated my terms on those I had been given for *The Giant's Robe*, which I fancy were much above what George Smith would have proposed but for the profit he had made on *Vice Versâ*. Consequently the negotiations with Messrs. Longmans fell through, and I took the book to Arrowsmith, who offered the usual percentage on a shilling book, and became its publisher a few months later.

*The Tinted Venus* sold, I think, about sixty thousand copies in a shilling edition and brought me over five hundred pounds in royalties. It was on the whole favourably noticed by the Press, but certainly did not retrieve the

reputation that had been lost by *The Giant's Robe*. If anything it confirmed an impression in some quarters that I 'could not draw a gentleman'. Cecil Clay, whose wife was the charming Miss Rosina Vokes of so many Drury Lane pantomimes, arranged with me for a dramatic version of the story by Oscar Wilde's brother William, in which Mrs. Clay was to be the Venus and Weedon Grossmith to make his first appearance on the regular stage as the hairdresser.

I had no practical knowledge of play-writing in those days, but Wilde's version when I read it did not impress me as a good one or likely to be successful. It was taken to America, where it proved a failure. I received £50 on account of royalties and that was all.

Some time later two ladies asked my permission to do a version of their own at a matinee for some charity, and I gave them permission subject to the Clays' consent and on the understanding that the version would not be performed elsewhere.

I heard no more of the ladies for some ten or fifteen years, and then they wrote to say that they had been touring the provinces with their version successfully for several years; that another company were playing a rival version, and would I join in taking legal proceedings to restrain them.

I replied that as my correspondents would remember I had given them my permission on the distinct understanding that their version was for a charitable occasion only and that I really could not be expected to help one pirate to restrain another.

But it appeared that I had done the poor ladies an injustice, for they had bought the dramatic rights from the Clays' secretary under the impression that he was entitled to dispose of them, a transaction in which I had not been consulted.

The original agreement between the Clays and myself

was very loosely worded and no doubt they believed that it gave them the entire right to the version. Very likely it did, for dramatic copyright did not exist in those days. But I certainly had not intended to give them more than the right to perform their version for a fee fixed for each performance. The two ladies offered me royalties on all their past and future productions if I would join them in an action, but though, of course, I expressed my regret for having so misjudged them, I declined their offer, as I preferred to stand aside. I never heard whether they brought their action or not, and I believe that both ladies are now dead. Possibly I should have been wiser to accept their offer, but at the time I thought it likely that to accept would mean far more worry than profit.

I was lunching at the Reform Club with Payn and William Black, some years after *The Tinted Venus* was published, when Black strongly recommended James Osgood, the head of the London branch of Harper's, who was present, to bring out an illustrated edition of the story, which Osgood agreed to do.

It was beautifully printed and got up, and excellently illustrated by my friend Bernard Partridge, but I fear Messrs. Harper must have lost a good deal of money by their enterprise, for only a limited number of copies were sold. People are not often ready to pay six shillings for a story which they can buy for one.

I spent the early part of the autumn of 1884 at a Hydro-pathic at Ilkley, not as a patient but because I thought it might be a useful experience. As a matter of fact I got no material there, or at least nothing that I ever made use of, but I had quite a pleasant time. The place was full and many of the visitors were clever and interesting people—the late Sir Frederic Wedmore was one of them—and I made some pleasant acquaintances. It was supposed to be conducted on strictly teetotal lines, and a favourite form

of gossip was to hint that some one or other of the guests was there to be cured of dipsomania. I have no doubt that I myself did not escape this suggestion.

There was one rather terrible person among the visitors, an elderly and extremely garrulous self-made man who used to embarrass us considerably when we gathered on the terrace after breakfast. 'You know,' he would inform us, 'it *does* surprise me that with so many young gentlemen and pretty young ladies about we don't seem to 'ear of any engagements.' And by way of encouragement he went on, 'When I put the question to my dear wife—well, she shoofted her feet about a bit—but she took care to 'ave me.'

'See that carriage and pair,' he continued. 'Nice turnout, isn't it? That's mine, that is. When I first started it my dear wife said it was wrong to spend so much money on lux'ries. But I told her, No—a carriage and 'orses weren't a luxury but a necessity to folks in our position. Wasn't I right?'

There was a well-appointed little theatre in the grounds where we got up performances, and one evening after the screen scene from *The School for Scandal* he came up to the lady who had been the Lady Teazle and said, 'Excuse me, Mum, but did you 'ave anything while you was be'ind that screen? You was there such a time that I did think of sending you round a couple of peaches but I was afraid you might consider it a liberty.'

He was a Nonconformist, and while I was looking on at a fancy-dress dance one evening he sidled up to me and said with a kind of pious snigger, 'I've just come from a very different scene from this—a love-feast at the Ben Rhydding Baptist Chapel.' But he proceeded to explain that he did not disapprove of innocent gaiety, which indeed he beamed upon for the rest of the evening.

He was an artless old soul and never suspected how we drew him out in the smoking-room, for he had, as a gillie



once remarked of Linley Sambourne, 'a gran' leg to pull', so we pulled it.

My friend, Mrs. Panton, a sister of Walter Frith and the author of several novels, had heard that Julian Hawthorne was the possessor of an idol which he believed had brought him ill luck. This had suggested a possible story to her mind, and she had asked me to get some information on the subject of idols for her, which I did in the British Museum Library.

The difficulty of treating such a subject was, of course, to hit upon the right kind of idol and a plausible reason for its resentment. There was a Burmese idol in my father's dressing-room—which led me to choose India as the place of origin for Mrs. Panton's malevolent deity. Our own idol had always preserved the strictest neutrality towards us, and besides a spiteful Buddha was out of the question. So I had to find some sect which honoured the images of departed saints and eventually decided upon the Jains. I had been reading Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism* and one or two works on psychic manifestations which helped me to devise a plausible motive for the idol's performances, but when I sent Mrs. Panton the result of my researches she insisted on handing over the idea to me.

So as she positively refused to treat it herself I very willingly undertook it as I had already begun to see its possibilities. The next thing was to invent a story and characters which would afford opportunities for the idol's activities, and by the spring of 1886 I had finished *A Fallen Idol* and submitted it to Messrs. Smith & Elder, not without dismal apprehensions that it would be declined.

But my luck still held, for after an anxious fortnight or so I had a letter from George Smith offering me a thousand pounds for the copyright. This, of course, I accepted gladly and I doubt very much whether any other publisher would have given so large a sum for the book or whether

George Smith would have done so had he not wished to make a further recognition of the success of *Vice Versâ*.

*A Fallen Idol* was very kindly noticed by *The Times* and most, but by no means all, of the leading journals. As I had parted with the copyright I received no account of the sales, but I knew it had a second edition followed by one in a cheaper form, and years afterwards it was issued in a sixpenny edition with an admirable picture of a Chinaman with the idol on the cover.

I can only hope that it sold well enough to recoup George Smith for his outlay, but I am inclined to think that he lost by it. If he did he was the last man to let me suspect it.

After the *Idol* was off my hands I began to plan a serious and more ambitious novel, but by the summer of 1887 had not done much more than sketch the scenario and make some notes on indigo-planting and gold-mining in India at the British Museum Reading Room, where, like all readers in those days, I found the late Dr. Garnett the most kind and helpful of advisers as to the best authorities to consult.

In the summer of 1887 I wrote the first chapters of *The Pariat* at Haslemere in rooms which I had taken for June and July. I laid my opening scenes at Trouville, having gone there for the purpose in August 1886. During the summer of that year I had for the first and last time in my life suffered from sleeplessness and had followed Dickens's example by taking long night walks. My favourite one was along the river bank from Hammersmith Mall to Kew, and among the old houses at Strand-on-the-Green I found one which seemed exactly suited for my heroine and her family.

But I did not manage to get them there while I was at Haslemere or to write more than two or three chapters. I was out during most of the day exploring the delightful neighbourhood, or there were afternoons pleasantly spent

at informal garden parties. Much of my working time had to be given to *Punch*, to which, being now on the staff, I was contributing every week; many of my burlesque recitations were written at Haslemere, besides a short story for the *Cornhill*, so that altogether I made very little progress with *The Pariah*.

But the central idea had taken a strong hold of me from the first, though there were times when I feared that I had undertaken what I had not sufficient powers to carry out. However, during the close of the year and all through 1888 I worked at it whenever I could, and by the spring of 1889 it was finished. I had felt the story intensely as I wrote it, and had put my best work into it, but though it fascinated me I cannot say that I found my usual enjoyment in creation. I naturally realized that, as a novel it would be far more popular if I could bring back my chief character transformed into a hero and a gentleman and let him win his disdainful lady at the end, but the interest and pathos of the story to me lay in the fact that he was neither a hero, nor, except in a sense which in actual life is not recognized—a gentleman. The story was too painful and I was troubled throughout by doubts whether I was not deceiving myself in thinking my work had any value. But I did know that it was a thoroughly sincere book and in sanguine moments I actually hoped that it might after all be considered as an advance on anything I had yet done.

In February 1889 my father died and our home life in Phillimore Gardens was ended. My sister had been married to George Millar for over three years. He was already making a good income at the Chancery Bar and was considered as likely to be a judge by the end of the century if not earlier.

At Whitsuntide that year he and my sister and I were in rooms together at Marlow and on the river as much as was possible. He seemed in his usual health until a day

or two before I had to leave them to go with the *Punch* staff to the Paris Exhibition. Then he looked so ill that I left in great anxiety about him and was relieved to hear on my return from Paris that he had quite recovered. But when I saw him I knew he was no better, and though he went on working and going about as usual that summer it became obvious that he was very seriously ill. And towards the end of July I joined him and my brothers at Seaford, when he and all of us knew that in all probability he was a doomed man. My brother Leonard, who was now in practice, had diagnosed the case as an internal growth from the first, and a specialist came down to Seaford and after seeing him could only confirm Leonard's diagnosis. George heard the verdict with extraordinary calm and courage and after writing to break it to my sister, who was expecting her second child, was arranging to go home to die when he suddenly became so much worse that it was impossible to move him, and the only thing to be done was to take the risk of sending for her before it was too late. She arrived in time to be with him for their last few hours together, and then brave and resigned to the last he died in her arms.

He lies in the beautiful churchyard at Blatchington, to which we had taken our last walk together only a week before his death; Robert Parker, T. R. Hughes, and other old Cambridge friends of his and mine stood by his grave, and we all felt that we were saying farewell to the truest friend, the noblest and most lovable nature, we had been privileged to know. None of us I am sure has ever met his like since.

There was an incident connected with those ghastly days at Seaford which I shall record here as it had a touch of grim humour. One afternoon George Millar and I were sitting on the lawn of his villa, which faced the road. It was before either of us knew that his case was really hopeless and we were chatting much as usual. I think he

had been reading the proofs of *The Pariab*, of which I shall always be proud to remember he thought highly.

A tramp of the very worst type, a really appalling ruffian, came along followed by a depressed and bedraggled woman and invited us across the low hedge to buy bootlaces. We told him we did not want any, but he persisted with the professional whine until my brother-in-law told him that he had better go away as he was only wasting his time.

Whereupon the tramp suddenly became indignant. 'Wystin' my toime, am I,' he bellowed. 'And what are you two doin' settin' there a-doin' nothink, eh? Ah, and lemme tell yer this,' he added with a burst of moral reprobation, 'lemme tell yer as it aint yer *own* toime you're a wystin' of—it's Gawd's toime!'

This from him was rather too much for our composure and we both burst out laughing, little as we were in the mood for it just then.

The tramp gave us up as hardened ribalds after this, and as he slouched off he remarked loudly to his companion, 'Yer do come across some bad people now and then!' And she replied, 'Yus, indeed, yer do!' as they passed out of sight.

I stayed with my sister in the little house at Brook Green until after my niece was born, when I went to rooms I had taken at Slindon near Arundel. I was there when *The Pariab* was published, and a day or two after I had a press cutting containing a review of it from *The Times*; it was a long notice and I began it without serious misgivings, for *The Times* had always treated me with marked indulgence.

However, I soon discovered that I had been over-sanguine; the critic on this occasion had very little to say of the book that was not damaging; it was inordinately long, it had no style, no incident, no character-drawing, some of it recalled the novels of Miss Charlotte Yonge and so forth. I was advised to give up writing third-rate

novels and return to the kind of work which was more within my range, or words to that effect.

I do not pretend to be indifferent to criticism, and for at least a day this notice depressed me considerably. But luckily I have an elastic temperament and failure has never lowered my spirits for long. I thought the critic had been a trifle hard on the book, but I recognized that there was a good deal in his advice.

*The Pariab* had been a long and severe strain; if it had proved a success I should have continued to write serious novels, but it was obviously not worth while to go through so much again for such a result.

Besides I much preferred a more frivolous vein and soon found that I rather welcomed a good reason for returning to it. Like Gilbert's curate I could say:

*I've often longed for some  
Excuse for this revulsion,  
Now that excuse has come—  
I do it on compulsion!*

And although the *Spectator* at least found more merit in *The Pariab* and some of my friends whose opinion I valued were evidently moved and impressed by it, I never again felt any inclination to attempt a 'full-dress' novel.

George Smith bought the copyright of *The Pariab* for a thousand pounds, and shortly after signing the agreement I found to my horror that he intended to run the novel as a serial in the *Cornhill*. I knew that it was most unsuitable for that purpose if only because of its length, and that its appearance in instalments would probably be most injurious to its prospects, so I wrote to him at once to that effect and offered either to accept a lower sum or cancel the agreement.

With his characteristic generosity he refused to hear of either proposal and gave up his idea of using the book

as a serial. In that form it might have recouped the sum he had given for it, but George Smith was the last man to trouble himself about such considerations where the feelings of one of his authors were concerned. So *The Pariah* first appeared in three-volume form—I think it must have been one of the last of the old three-deckers. Later there was a cheap edition, but I question whether the total sales came anywhere near the thousand pounds I received for the copyright, and what success the book obtained was no more than a *succès d'estime*. I found, too, rather to my surprise, that a great many people did not know what the word 'pariah' meant, or when they did, were uncertain how to pronounce it, which naturally was not calculated to advance the book's fortunes.

So for some years after that I confined myself to short stories and *Punch* work, which I thoroughly enjoyed.

I think it was either in 1889 or the following year that I once more found myself under suspicion of deliberate plagiarism.

It happened in this way: the editor of *The Sunday Sun* was publishing a series of personal experiences by various authors and invited me to contribute one of my own. I replied that I had no such experience to relate, but that if he liked and if I could obtain the necessary permission I could tell a perfectly true story of what had happened to certain friends of mine. To this he agreed: I got my friends' permission and sent him 'The Angora Cat'.

The story was briefly as follows: When my two friends were about to be married the lady was asked by an old friend of hers what she would most like as a wedding present, whereupon she confessed that it had long been the dream of her life to possess an Angora cat. The friend, thinking that Jamrach in Ratcliff Highway was the most likely person to have such an animal, went to his establishment there. Jamrach was absent, but an assistant

showed him what appeared to be a rather ill-conditioned kitten, explaining that it had only just arrived and when fed up and properly cared for would turn out a remarkably fine specimen.

So the friend arranged that it should be kept where it was until the young couple would have returned from their honeymoon and then dispatched to their house in Earl's Terrace, Kensington.

Some weeks later he received a grateful letter from the bride; the cat had arrived, and was a most magnificent creature already; she had had no idea that Angoras had such beautiful markings.

Evidently his offering was a success, he concluded with relief, for he had had his doubts whether he had chosen it wisely.

For some reason or other it was not until a considerable time after receiving that letter that he made his first call at the house in Earl's Terrace. As he neared the front door he was surprised to see that one of the dining-room windows was smashed, and still more surprised when, after he had rung several times, no one appeared to answer the door. It was opened at last, but very cautiously and on a chain, by a scared parlourmaid with one arm bandaged, who explained that her mistress was out. 'But what has been happening to you?' he asked, and she said: 'The cat did that, sir. But Cook's worse than me!'

Then she told her tale. It appeared that she and the Cook were having fish for dinner and had given some to the Angora cat. It wanted more and was refused, so it had leaped on the table and helped itself.

They had tried to prevent it and it had suddenly lost its temper and attacked them. The two servants had caught up the fire-irons to protect themselves and after a terrific combat had driven it upstairs to the dining-room, where with an appalling yell it had dashed through the closed window and fled across the road into Holland Park,



and they were, quite unnecessarily, in deadly fear that it might return at any moment, which accounted for the door being on the chain.

The donor of the cat was naturally horrified and indignant and went off to Ratcliff Highway to tell Jamrach what he thought of him. But he hadn't said much before the dealer interrupted him. 'I know, Sir, I know,' he said; 'it wouldn't have happened if I'd been there. It was all that fool of a man of mine. Why bless your 'eart, Sir, what he sold you wasn't no Angora kitten—it was a lynx cub!'

That was my friends' story, and, with the preliminary explanation that it was not an experience of my own, I wrote it for *The Sunday Sun*, exactly as it had been told to me, and it was published in that journal. Shortly afterwards I received a stiffly worded letter from the editor to the effect that in view of the enclosures it contained he must ask me for an explanation. The enclosures were: first, a letter from a correspondent pointing out that my contribution was obviously pirated from a story in *Tom Hood's Annual* for that year, and, second, the page from the annual containing that story.

I forget now by how long it had preceded mine, but probably quite long enough for plagiaristic purposes, while there was no doubt that the two versions exactly coincided. The explanation, of course, was that the *Tom Hood's Annual* contributor had got his story from the donor or some one who had heard it from the donor of the supposed Angora kitten.

I wrote to the editor giving this explanation, and also returning the amount I had been paid, and although I no longer remember what followed I have no doubt that he inserted a paragraph accounting for what was certainly a highly suspicious resemblance.

And I have no doubt either that there were a good many excellent people who never saw the explanation

and were only confirmed in the belief that I had once more been exposed as a shameless plagiarist.

Altogether it was an unfortunate business and I have never since made use of any of my friends' experiences even though, as in this case, they assured me that I could safely do so.

X

1889-1899

IN 1889 Alexander Hatchard proposed to publish a volume of my *Voces Populi* with illustrations, and I agreed on condition that Bernard Partridge should be induced to do them, for his drawings for J. K. Jerome's *Stageland* had convinced me that he was the ideal illustrator for my kind of work, and so it proved. Before the volume came out Hatchard's business was amalgamated with another firm whose name I forget and the new partnership was acquired by Messrs. Longmans, who again became my publishers.

*Voces Populi* appeared in the autumn of 1890 in a rather awkward quarto form due to the difficulty, afterwards overcome, of reducing Partridge's admirable drawings. It was well reviewed and must have sold fairly well as it was followed by a second series and eventually by pocket editions, but I did not make or expect to make more than a moderate sum from any of them. In the summer of 1890 I went abroad alone, taking the route on which in the following year I sent Podbury and Culchard, though during my tour I had no idea of utilizing my experiences in any particular form. But I kept a carefully noted up diary which came in usefully afterwards.

At table d'hôte one evening at my hotel at Brussels I discovered that I had forgotten to transfer my note-case when changing for dinner and went to my bedroom to recover it. But it was not as I had thought in a pocket of my morning suit. I searched the carpet under the bed, every place where it could possibly have fallen, but it was nowhere to be seen. Somehow I had lost or been robbed of all but a few francs of the money I had brought out, which was a disagreeable discovery. I told the proprietor,

who of course declared that he was not responsible. My bedroom was on the ground floor, and if I had left my note-case on my dressing-table it was quite possible for a passer-by to reach it through the open window.

All I could do after wiring to my bank for fresh supplies was to go to a police-station with one of the hotel interpreters—a sinister, shabby person who struck me as quite capable of having my notes about him—announce my loss and give the numbers of the missing notes.

The commissioner and sergeants were not encouraging: any one who had stolen the notes, they said, would almost certainly have changed them by that time; they cheered me with tales of stolen circular notes which had been cashed at Ostend on the very day of their disappearance. It was arranged that I should spend the next morning in going the round of all the pawnbrokers in Brussels in the interpreter's company, which was very far from my notion of a continental tour.

So after a depressing hour or two in the dingy police-station waiting while forms were filled up with maddening deliberation, I went back to my hotel and up to my bedroom in a very chastened spirit. And just under the valance of the bed, where I could not have failed to see it while I was searching, was my note-case with all its contents intact. The only possible explanation was that some one in the hotel had stolen the case and, becoming alarmed by finding that I had gone to the police with a list of the numbers of the notes, had tossed it back into my bedroom. If he or she had been clever enough to put it under a chest of drawers or in a dark corner I should have had to conclude that my search had not been as thorough as I thought, but the case lay where I could not possibly have missed it. However, I did not tell the proprietor this—he would probably not have believed it, and besides I was much too relieved at getting my money back to mention more than its recovery.

The next morning I had to go before the police magistrate, inform him that I had recovered the case and apologize for the trouble I had given him: I did not enjoy this job, but at all events I had got off a morning spent with the interpreter in interviewing pawnbrokers.

By way of consolation he kindly offered to show me the night side of Brussels that evening and, when I declined this opportunity, to sell me some real Brussels lace, 'for my sveetart', and this offer also being declined we parted company.

This experience at least served to make me more careful; never again when travelling did I forget my note-case.

At Chur I shared a table with Captain Ames, the tallest man in the British Army; he must have been much nearer seven feet than six and made me feel even smaller than I am.

I only saw him once more and then he was leading the '97 Jubilee procession, and a very splendid figure he made.

It was at Chur, too, that I met Bishop Browne, then Suffragan bishop of, I think, Stepney, whom I remember at table d'hôte explaining the derivation of 'menu' to a very deferential ex-Lord Mayor of London. The next day I travelled with the bishop in the diligence coupé and found him most pleasant and interesting; he told me a great deal about the local architecture and the Romance dialect.

He must have been a little over fifty then, a tall vigorous man and a keen climber. Only a few weeks ago, forty years since our meeting, I saw the announcement of his death.

At the Grande Bretagne in Bellagio I found my friend Alexander Wedderburn and his wife, to whom he introduced me, and later at their invitation I joined them at their hotel at Venice and shared their gondola on all their expeditions. This procured me one of the very few

fortnights every day and every hour of which I would gladly, were it permitted me, live over again.

I had intended to return by P. and O. from Venice, but I found I had to catch a boat at Brindisi, which I did. It was the *Britannia* from Melbourne and there were just enough passengers on board to be sociable, so I had a pleasant but uneventful eleven days' voyage to Plymouth. One of the passengers it is true was rather trying; a good-looking and, I understood, very wealthy young fellow who had been sent round the world to cure him of drinking. Evidently the tour had not had that effect, for although the stewards had been forbidden to serve him with drink he must have bribed one of them, for he never appeared at meals completely sober and frequently he was very distinctly otherwise. However, he was seldom actually offensive and generally did nothing more than scribble doggerel poems on the back of the menu cards and pass them round for the general delectation. Once, indeed, he interrupted a concert by idiotic laughter and comments and had to be removed, but on the whole we suffered him patiently, feeling that he was far more to be pitied than blamed.

There was a mysterious young Maltese on board, who spoke to no one, but about whom the wildest rumours were circulated. One was that he had left thirteen children behind him at Malta. I had no reason for supposing that there was the slightest foundation for any one of these stories, but at sea that matters little if at all.

One morning, while a sailor was putting back the ship's clock, I happened to say something which caused my neighbour to suggest that I might write a story on the subject. And gradually I evolved the idea of the time-cheques and the book which Arrowsmith published under the title *Tourmalin's Time Cbeques*, afterwards altered to *The Time Bargain*; it was published at a shilling and had a mild success, though it did nothing to restore my repu-

tation. But I had enjoyed writing it, which was all I cared about, and in 1891 I found even more enjoyment in personally conducting 'The Travelling Companions' through the pages of *Mr. Punch*.

It was published later in volume form by Messrs. Longmans with Partridge's excellent illustrations, first as a quarto then in pocket editions. It was never, of course, a 'best seller', the general public having no great liking for stories told entirely in dialogue. But it was approved of by several whose approval was worth having—the late Sir Sidney Colvin, I am glad to remember, being one of them. Altogether my continental trip had proved a good investment.

In 1892 Sir Edmund Gosse and William Archer made Ibsen known to English readers and playgoers and I was quite unable to resist parodying some of the plays in *Punch*. Not that I was wholly blind to his genius, but the naïvety and (or so I chose to consider it) the unconscious humour of much of the dialogue and incident tempted me too strongly.

He would, I think now, have been less vulnerable on these points if his translators had not so conscientiously followed the Norwegian idiom and rendered it with more freedom. But, after all, their versions held the stage for many years, and only a very few among their audiences seemed to discover, as I am afraid I did, that there was a comic element in their intense seriousness. I made a woman friend very angry with me once, I remember, because I had mildly suggested that 'nine lovely dolls' was rather an excessive number for Mrs. Solness to lament in *The Master Builder*. She said I was evidently incapable of seeing the pathos implied in that particular figure, which I admitted I was. Still—scoff and jeer as some of us might, and did—it was Ibsen and Ibsen only who showed English dramatists that motives could be made intelligible on the stage without the use of long soliloquies or asides

which gave the speaker away to the very person he was trying to cajole. No one who compares the English comedies written before and after the late nineties can fail to notice the gradual disuse of these particular conventions. And nowadays no self-respecting dramatist would allow the writer or recipient of a letter to read the contents aloud; some other means of informing the audience must be found.

I have not read any very recent French comedies, but from those I have read I have an impression that, until the War at all events, their dramatists preferred the pre-Ibsen methods. But, for all I know, they have become converted by this time.

I think it was in 1892 that I first met William Archer. I had been commissioned by Messrs. Harper to do an article on the minor London music-halls for *Harper's Magazine*; the late Joseph Pennell was to illustrate it and he and I arranged to dine and visit various halls together. Archer, who was a friend of Pennell's, joined us in our expeditions.

We had weird meals in various East and South London eating-houses before the performances. Archer I found pleasant and sedate, not resenting my irreverence towards Ibsen in the least, and in his quiet way thoroughly enjoying the rich absurdity of the 'dramatic sketches' which were a feature of all minor music-hall performances in those days and gloriously unlike any sort of real life.

Pennell was already famous as a draughtsman in black and white and I was proud to have his co-operation, but as a companion I thought him too much inclined to carp and grumble at things in general to be agreeable. However, we finished our rounds together without friction, but although he lived till a year or two ago I never saw him again.

But I came to know and like Archer very well indeed in the early years of this century, when we were private



in the Inns of Court Rifle Volunteer Corps and generally managed to be in the same tent when in camp. I met him again in the early days of the Great War with his only son, to whom he introduced me. After the War, Archer, who had only been known till then as a translator of Ibsen and a dramatic critic of exceptional competence and fairness, obtained an overwhelming success as a dramatist with *The Green Goddess*. Unhappily the son to whom he was devoted had been killed at the front, and fame and fortune had little but irony for Archer, who did not survive him long.

In the spring of 1893 I contributed to *Punch* a story in dialogue called 'The Man from Blankley's', and another in the following year called 'Lyre and Lancet'. Both these stories were dramatized later.

So far as I was concerned, the idea of 'The Man from Blankley's' was entirely due to an article I had read in *The Pall Mall Gazette*, and for a long time I was under the impression that it had never been treated by any one but myself. But one day I had a letter from Mrs. William Allhusen, a most charming and accomplished woman, and the author of *Miss Molly* and some other novels of real distinction. Her letter informed me that, two or three years before my dialogue story appeared in *Punch*, she had herself published a story—I think also in dialogue form—on practically the same lines. It had appeared in some magazine which was unknown to me then, but when I read it I recognized that there was a startling similarity between her story and my own. In both there was a guest engaged from a Universal Provider's to fill a vacant fourteenth seat at a dinner-party. In both the supposed 'Man from Blankley's' had mistaken the house, and in both the host and hostess, unless I am mistaken, found that his most innocent remarks and actions betrayed his standing.

The difference was that, in her story, the host, hostess,

and company were all well-bred people, and that nothing was said or done to give away the secret—the real nature of which was only discovered—I forget how—after his departure.

Mrs. Allhusen, I know, never for a moment imagined that I had borrowed from her, and this letter was the beginning of a friendship which ended only with her early and lamented death.

Some time in the nineties I did a dramatic version of my novel *The Pariab*, and submitted it to Tree for the Haymarket. By that time I had acquired some knowledge of how a play should be constructed and written. I had read all the plays by English and French dramatists that I came across, and was a constant playgoer; writing the 'Voces' and stories in dialogue for *Punch* had been some preparation for dialogue on the stage, and Ibsen's plays, though I only studied them with a view to parody, had taught me, unconsciously, something of construction.

So I think my play *The Pariab* was not hopelessly bad—indeed the late Holman Clark, who read it for Tree, told me subsequently that he, personally, had been deeply moved by it. Tree, however, declined it, and was perfectly right in doing so, for the story was much too depressing to have any chance of success on the stage.

I was satisfied with this one decision, tore up the play, and, for a time, concluded that I had no vocation as a dramatist.

I spent August and part of September of 1893 at Evolena in the Rhône Valley with the Fothergill Robinsons, and on my way home at Geneva I bought my first three Swiss stained glass panels—all of them, as I had not the knowledge to discover then, modern copies. But they were good copies and extremely decorative. I sold one at Christie's afterwards—of course as a copy—and it

fetched more than I had given for it, so the Genevese dealer cannot be said to have robbed me.

And the next year I began to collect panels which are undoubtedly of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and to learn to distinguish 'fakes' from genuine articles.

In August 1894 I joined the J. M. Barries at Pontresina. The hotel manager to whom I had written to engage a room had cabled in reply 'room reserved', but I found on arrival that it was at the other end of the village and about ten minutes' walk from the hotel. I protested to the manager that I had not expected so reserved a room as that, but he merely expressed polite regret that his hotel was full up and he could do no better for me. Fortunately for me Douglas Freshfield, whom I knew, was at the hotel with his family, and as soon as he heard of my predicament came to the rescue. As he was the President of the Alpine Club his word carried weight, and the manager at once discovered that he could accommodate me in the hotel after all.

I accompanied Douglas Freshfield and two of his daughters on a mild climb on a minor Piz not at all difficult, though we were roped once while straddling across an arête. At a certain stage of the descent we had a bird's-eye view of Pontresina about a thousand feet below, and noticed what we took to be a dust storm which seemed to be blowing through a street of small wooden shops and bazaars. As we looked, the cloud changed from dun colour to dark grey and tiny black figures ran about like disturbed ants, flames broke out and licked up shop after shop with extraordinary quickness, destroying at least half a dozen of them before the firemen could check the spread. One old man, we were told, died while he was being carried to safety, but no other lives were lost.

The next day I was in the little street with a friend, and as we passed a surviving shop which dealt in lace and embroideries she had the kind thought of going in to

congratulate the proprietress on her escape. My friend was a very charming person but distinctly inclined to gush; she burst into the little shop, which was kept by a handsome but rather formidable-looking Frenchwoman, and with her head on one side cooed: 'Et vous n'êtes pas brûlée—Quel bonheur!'

To which the Frenchwoman, magnificently intolerant of the obvious, replied chillingly, 'Puisque je suis ici!' and I think we went out again.

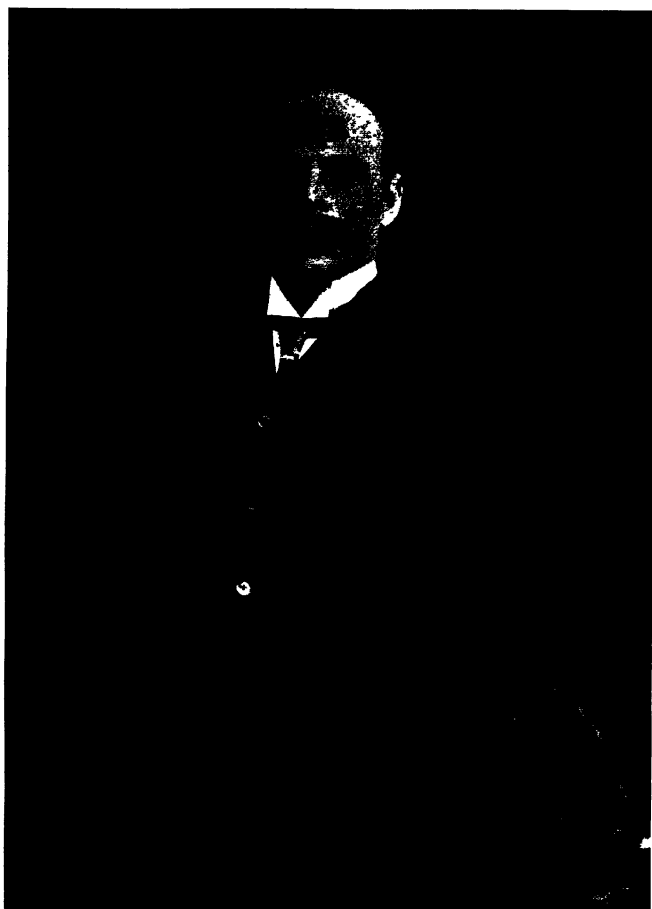
I had many walks and talks with Barrie at Pontresina; his first play *Walker London* had been produced some time before by J. L. Toole, who, Barrie told me, considered £500 an extravagantly handsome sum for the dramatic rights. But Toole belonged to a period when royalties were unknown and managers purchased plays at a trifling sum per act. He was kind-hearted, and when he heard later that Barrie was seriously ill he offered to provide him with any delicacies, &c., that might be necessary, being, as Barrie said, apparently under the impression that a dramatist must necessarily be impecunious.

Barrie's illness, from which he had only just recovered, was a very severe one, and I remember his telling me how when he was just beginning to take solid food he had a violent fancy for fried whittings. But when they were brought to him in his bedroom at Kirriemuir he turned from them sobbing broken-heartedly—'They haven't got their tails in their mouths!' he said, and could not be comforted.

About 1894, 'Missing Word' competitions were popular and he devised a sentence which I believe no one succeeded in completing correctly. It was: 'Mr. Toole asked me to come to his dressing-room and no sooner had I entered than I sat down on his ——.' But it was not on one of Mr. Toole's properties but on his invitation that Barrie sat down.

I was with the Barries when they bought their first





*Photo: Bassano, Ltd.*

Anstey Guthrie in the Nineties

St. Bernard pup, which was so small that it was carried to England in Mrs. Barrie's muff. It was the predecessor of more than one splendid dog of the same breed which Barrie trained to perform all kinds of tricks, and one at least of them acted with great credit in his private theatricals. Unhappily, as du Maurier found as well as Barrie, the life of St. Bernards is a pitifully short one.

Charles Wyndham was staying at St. Moritz in 1894 and, as I had met him more than once in London, kindly asked me over to luncheon twice at his hotel. At that time, and for several years before and afterwards, Charles Wyndham was one of the leading and most popular actor-managers in London. Like Charles Hawtrey, he generally retained his own personality on the stage, and, like him, too, was always absolutely easy and natural in whatever part he played. In Farce he would rattle off preposterous lines with irresistible verve; in Comedy I doubt if he has ever been equalled for finesse and lightness of touch, and in more serious plays, such as H. A. Jones's *Mrs. Dane's Defence*, he could be most powerfully incisive. He had a keen, pleasant face, a curious distinction in all his movements, and a voice which was capable of every possible intonation from rollicking nonsense to deep pathos; no one in his day made love on the stage more delightfully.

And having admired him from my undergraduate days I felt very proud that he should have remembered me. As a matter of fact, however, I must admit that his remembrance was a trifle hazy, as at one of these luncheons he introduced me to his party as 'Ashby Sterry', and after another he told a friend of mine that 'Guthrie had lunched there but Anstey couldn't come'. So I never quite knew who he really thought I was, but he was very cordial and kind and his luncheon parties were extremely pleasant, so it did not matter much.

Towards the end of his life I heard that his memory

became very imperfect indeed, but if so I never saw any signs of it in his acting.

Another well-known actor who was at St. Moritz that year was Arthur Cecil, as his stage name was—his real surname was Blunt. I had met him often at the Linley Sambournes' and known him as an actor from the days when I had been taken as a boy to the 'Gallery of Illustrations', as the German Reeds called their tiny theatre in Regent Street. Since then he had made himself a name as a character actor in most of the West End theatres and was the original 'Mr. Posket' in *The Magistrate*, 'Vere Queckett' in *The Schoolmistress*, and 'Blore' in *Dandy Dick*, and inimitable in all these extraordinarily effective parts.

In private life no actor could have less of the theatre in his appearance or manner than Arthur Cecil, whose delicately precise speech and bearing rather suggested a pleasant type of college don. I think he was glad to get away from all association with the stage when on a holiday.

He was interesting and quietly humorous in conversation, with a delightfully simple enjoyment of nature. I got him to walk part of the way with me to Maloja, and I remember his delight on seeing a black squirrel in a wood and the enthusiasm with which he ran among the trees to discover where it had gone.

At the hotel at Maloja I found the beautiful and brilliant Mrs. Craigie ('John Oliver Hobbes') with her small son; also Oscar Browning, whom, although he was a don at King's in my time, I had never met but once before and that was in Switzerland during my first long vacation. Then he had climbed into the compartment of the railway carriage in which the Youngs and I were travelling, and had not been there long before he told us who he was and



how he had been consulting authorities at various continental libraries for a course of historical lectures he was to give at Cambridge. Oddly enough, I never saw him there during the whole time I was up, though he must have been in residence and often in the streets. In 1876 he had been bronzed and thickset with something of the sailor in his general appearance; in the eighteen years since our first meeting he had grown extremely stout but was as voluble and energetic as ever. There was a dance at the Maloja hotel that evening, and he arrayed himself in lemon kid gloves and waltzed with immense perseverance. I had some conversation with him that evening and found him pleasant and gracious, but our previous acquaintance being so short and so long ago it would have been futile to remind him of it.

I went on via Promontogno to Bellagio, where I joined Lady Lyell, to whom and her two young daughters I had been introduced at Pontresina by Barrie. Sir Charles Stanford, the composer, was a friend of theirs and accompanied us in one of our rowing excursions on the lake; I remember that, considering that his boatmen were rowing dangerously fast, he tried to moderate their pace by exclaiming 'Piccolo! Piccolo!' in somewhat agitated tones, and quite without effect. However, as the boat was a heavy one, the oarsmen skilled, and their oars worked on pins, we found a secret joy in Sir Charles's anxiety.

I parted from the Lyells near Zurich, to which I went on alone in the hope of finding some really genuine stained glass panels, and knowing that the British Consul, Mr. (afterwards Sir Henry) Angst, was a great authority on Swiss antiquities generally (he was then superintending the building of the fine Museum at Zurich), I went to him for advice. On his recommendation I went to Boscard, the leading jeweller and dealer in antiquities at Lucerne. He had a picturesque old house opposite what is now the museum, with a large inner glazed courtyard,

and a rich and varied collection of works of Swiss art, including several fine panels. I bought two of them, and I wish now that I had had the courage to buy more, for in those days prices were nothing like what they are now.

I might have acquired a particularly good early sixteenth-century panel of a standard-bearer for £17; it is now in the museum and a dealer would ask at least £150 for it if it were for sale. A well-known English dealer offered me £250 not long ago for one of the two panels I did buy for no more than £24, and the other one for which I gave, I think, £16, I could easily sell for £100 now.

But these with the rest of my stained glass will go to the Victoria and Albert Museum when I am no longer in a position to enjoy them. I bought several more panels from Bossard, whose prices were always moderate, but he has been dead many years now and his beautiful old house is used for other purposes.

I formed my collection of over thirty panels during subsequent years at Munich, Frankfort, Basle, Constance, Zurich, and London.

It must have been in the early nineties that I had a letter from a gentleman—I forget his name, but I will call him Mr. Deloraine—telling me that he wished to see me about a dramatic commission he hoped I would undertake. I had not written any plays at that time but was very willing to try my hand at one, so I asked him to call on me.

At the appointed hour there was a ring at the bell, and presently my housekeeper, in a tone that suggested a dawning suspicion that I was not the blameless character she had imagined me, announced 'Miss Deloraine'.

When Miss Deloraine entered I was better able to understand that tone. She was an overblown lady with peroxidized hair and—which in those days was more remarkable than it would be now—a highly artificial com-

plexion; she wore a large picture-hat and a tippet made from the fur of some animal which may have looked handsomer in it than she did.

She explained that her brother had been unable to keep the appointment and as she was acting with him she had come in his stead.

After she had sat down, which she did with elaborate gentility, I asked her what sort of piece it was that she and her brother required.

'Well,' she said, 'it's a sketch, if you know what I mean.'

I said I did, and asked where she thought of performing it.

'Oh,' she said airily, 'on the 'Alls.'

And exactly what sort of sketch had she in her mind, I asked out of sheer curiosity, for I had already decided that she was unlikely to inspire me.

'Well,' she said again, 'we want something witty.'

'Witty?' I said feebly. 'I see.'

'But without words, you know,' she explained.

I suggested that there might be some difficulty in being witty in dumb show. 'Oh, I'm sure *you* could do it,' she said, which was a compliment I felt I had no right to. And, again from nothing but curiosity, I asked if she could give me some idea of the kind of entertainment she wanted.

'Well,' she said, 'I had an ideer. I don't know what *you*'ll think of it. A sea-side scene, you know, with a lot o' people all getting into their wrong bathing-machines. 'Ow does that strike you?'

It struck me with an appalling vision of Miss Deloraine in a bathing costume uttering ear-piercing screams. But I said that while I could quite see that it might be riotously funny if treated by the right person, I did not feel myself competent to do justice to it, nor had I any other suggestions to offer her. So I was afraid, &c., &c.

I fancy she had already been disillusioned with me, for she accepted my decision with obvious relief. Miss Deloraine recognized that I was not the author to bring her either fame or fortune, and I entirely agreed with her. So we parted with mutual satisfaction. But I never saw either her or the bathing-machines on any music-hall stage and so conclude that her ideal was never to find fulfilment.

1895 is memorable for me as the year in which I learnt to ride a safety bicycle. At Cambridge I had ridden one of the old high wheel boneshakers with wooden tyres and a brake which if forcefully applied sent one flying over the handlebars; a stone in the road had the same effect, while I seldom dismounted without finding myself under the machine.

In spite of these slight inconveniences I cycled a good deal and once pedalled laboriously as far as Newmarket and back. But I never found cycling very enjoyable, and when I went down from Cambridge parted with my machine with no regret.

When I first mounted a pneumatic-tyred safety I thought it would be an easy affair to ride compared with the boneshaker, but I did not find it so and fell off with discouraging frequency before I acquired the secret of steering and balance.

But as soon as I did so new joys lay open to me. For two or three years cycling was a popular amusement and one could cycle with friends to breakfast in Kensington Gardens or Battersea Park or to tea at Richmond or Kew in the summer. One took one's bicycle for country-house visits as a matter of course and made various expeditions in the neighbourhood with pleasant parties.

Then, even before motoring had come in, the bicycle ceased to be in favour as a social vehicle. I fancy few people really liked cycling for its own sake and most

were glad enough to give it up when it was no longer the thing to be seen doing. So I soon found myself cycling alone, for it happened to be the only form of exercise at which I was fairly good and which partly for that reason I thoroughly enjoyed. In the winter I could ride out from Duke Street to lunch at Uxbridge or Gerrard's Cross or St. Albans or eastward to Epping Forest; in the summer I took rooms in some country farm-house or town and explored the neighbourhood within a radius of twenty miles or so.

In 1897 I again tried a more serious vein with *The Statement of Stella Maberly*, the idea for which had haunted me for some years. I made the mistake of publishing it anonymously, and, though its authorship was soon divulged, it excited no attention. It may be that I had not skill or power enough to treat the idea, which I still think was an original and striking one, with sufficient effectiveness. At all events it had very few readers, and I own to thinking that it deserved better fortunes than it got. But all authors think that about their failures, and I was certainly not depressed by the coldness of *Stella Maberly's* reception. There is always one mitigation about a literary failure—one does not fully realize it until receiving the publisher's accounts six months or so later, by which time it has become of less importance.

In the same year I began a series in *Punch* under the heading 'Jottings and Tittlings by Hurry Bungsho Jabberjee'. From the time I was at Cambridge I had delighted in Babu English and the incomparable 'Life of the Hon. Justice Mookerjee' by his nephew, and it had long been an ambition of mine to imitate, so far as possible, the style of that classic. I was not personally acquainted with any Indian gentleman (if I had been it would, of course, have been a breach of manners to use him as 'copy'), but I had a good collection of Indo-Anglian

literature, and several friends who had lived most of their lives in India and who kindly gave me all the information I asked for.

While the series was appearing in *Punch* protests were made by some on the ground that it was calculated to produce ill feeling among influential and high-class natives in India. I doubt whether these were, or are, accustomed to regard the Bengali Babu with such veneration as all that, and certainly the articles were not resented by any of Mr. Jabberjee's fellow students, some of whom wrote to Burnand offering to do them better on very moderate terms.

So, on the whole, my withers remained unwrung. Messrs. Methuen published the papers in 1898 under the title of *Baboo Jabberjee, B.A.*, with illustrations by Bernard Partridge, which were so exactly right that they should have made the book famous. It never became that, but it was favourably reviewed and had quite a satisfactory sale. There was a neat American edition, published by Messrs. Appleton, but the American public knows and cares nothing about the Babu, and Mr. Jabberjee was not understood or read in the States.

After my Jabberjee papers appeared in *Punch* the late George Grossmith was strongly in favour of my writing a play in which his brother Weedon should figure, though they both thought it would require a stronger dramatic motive than that in the original series. To this I could not see my way, so it was arranged that Arthur Law (the author of *The Country Mouse* and other successful comedies) and I should collaborate. He provided a plot which turned on the manoeuvres of a shady financier to get a concession for a ruby mine out of Jabberjee, who was posing as an Indian prince. But when Law read it to Weedon Grossmith at his charming old house in Canonbury, he was evidently unfavourably impressed, and eventually turned the play down.

When I returned to town in the autumn of 1897 after some country-house visits, I happened to see in my evening paper an account of a wedding that had been performed in the lion-cage of some circus in America, and instantly I had an idea for a story which I knew I should enjoy writing, and my lost sense of humour returned to me.

The story, which I called 'Love among the Lions', was published in *The Idler* in two monthly parts, the first of which appeared in August 1898, and it was fortunate for me that it did so, for *Harper's Magazine* for that same month contained a story with much the same motive. Had mine appeared later I should have found it difficult—after my experience with *The Giant's Robe*—to meet another charge of plagiarism.

I got £120 for the serial rights of *Love among the Lions*, but when published in volume form it had no great success either in England or the United States, though it was quite well reviewed by the Press of both countries.

Still as I had not expected any considerable sale I was neither disappointed nor depressed by the returns, especially as by the time they came in I was engaged on a more ambitious story and with more delight and hopefulness than I had felt in any previous work. For though I wrote *Vice Versâ* with delight it was never with more than the very faintest hope.

In the autumn of 1898 I found myself once more at a loss for an idea of any kind and was re-reading various poets with a faint hope that I might come upon something that would stimulate my torpid imagination.

And one afternoon I did, in Rossetti's *Rose Mary*. In that poem, as will be remembered, there is a mystic beryl stone in which spirits are imprisoned and this made me wonder whether a humorous story might be based on some such stone. After consideration I decided that this was impracticable; but were there not possibilities in a

spirit enclosed in something and subsequently released? Only enclosed in what, and why? And presently I remembered the old Arabian Nights story of the Fisherman and the Djinn which supplied the answer to both questions, and I noted down the rough idea at once, and in a day or two was at work on the rough outline of *The Brass Bottle*.

From a merely pecuniary point of view it was a fortunate moment for me when I took up that volume of 'Ballads and Sonnets', for from serial and volume rights, dramatic royalties and cinema licences, *The Brass Bottle* cannot have brought me less than eight thousand pounds, though of course I only thought of it at the time as a subject after my own heart.

I had a three-volume illustrated edition of Lane's *Arabian Nights* from which I made careful extracts; his notes and the proper forms of salutation and compliment were particularly helpful, while I welcomed the discovery that the correct name for a 'Djinn' was Jinnee. I knew I could do more with a Jinnee than ever I could with a Djinn or Genie.

By the spring of 1899 I had completed an elaborate scenario of my proposed story, and it then occurred to me that it might have a chance of acceptance as a serial in *The Strand Magazine*, and I sent my scenario accordingly to Mr. Greenhough Smith, the editor, who after reading it commissioned me to write the story. Having no idea what terms I could ask for a serial in *The Strand*, I consulted my friend Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, with whom I was spending a week-end and who I knew was the best and kindest of advisers. He suggested ten guineas per thousand words, and I had no difficulty in obtaining a contract on those terms from Mr. Greenhough Smith.

I like to remember, by the way, that Conan Doyle was not only one of the very few who read my unfortunate *Statement of Stella Maberly*, but that he wrote me a



generously enthusiastic letter about it and spoke of the story frequently during my visit to him.

I spent the summer of 1899 at a small farm at Great Brickhill in Bucks. writing *The Brass Bottle* during most mornings and evenings and taking long bicycle rides when I was not at work.

Those weeks were among the happiest of my life; it was an unspeakable relief to feel that the literary instinct had revived, and that I was writing with keener zest than I had done for years. And the weather was perfect, the surrounding country so lovely and so abounding in charming old towns and villages that an afternoon or all-day ride was always a delight, which was sometimes increased by week-end visits from my brothers and friends.

It is true that towards the end, when the finished manuscript had been dispatched to the editor, I began to have qualms and misgivings about it, but I have never finished any book without feeling them, and in this case at all events they were not justified by the result.

*The Brass Bottle* was published in volume form in November 1900. The notices were generally favourable, though one critic pronounced it 'very poor stuff' and another remarked that it could only please children. In America its sales were negligible and I was sent a press cutting from New York which ran: 'A much cleverer fellow than Anstey told the same story a thousand years ago in *The Arabian Nights* and told it much better.'

*The Brass Bottle*, as a book at least, has long ceased to appear in its publisher's lists, and for all I know is out of print, but for a time it was one of my few successes, and even if it had not been it would always have been associated for me with nothing but the pleasantest memories.

## XI

1899-1903

**A**FTER leaving Great Brickhill I spent part of August in London and I wrote *A Short Exposure*, a one-act farce founded on a short story of mine, which Arthur Bouchier produced and appeared in at an experimental matinee in 1901, and which was the one and only occasion of its performance.

December 1899 and January 1900 were dark and anxious months for England—the Boer War had begun as badly as possible for us; every week brought news of some fresh disaster to our arms, a tide of hatred against this country was sweeping most of Europe and it looked as if at least two great continental Powers might at any moment take advantage of our difficulties and combine to attack us. Probably it was only our Navy that prevented them.

Times such as these were not conducive to humorous invention and I had ample leisure for volunteer duties, and accordingly became a private in the Inns of Court early in 1900. After the drill had been mastered, these duties were by no means arduous. I found I rather liked parades and marches and camping out under canvas at Ludgershall or Bulford, and much to my surprise, as I had never handled any kind of gun before, I became a fairly good shot with a rifle.

It was pleasant to think and be told, as we were occasionally by inspecting generals, that we should render valuable service to our country in case of invasion, but I think we all realized that no Volunteer Corps, however well-intentioned, could take the field in case of invasion as an individual unit without much more extensive

equipment than the War Office would consider worth while.

So whenever we had to march through the streets there was a touch of ironical humour in finding ourselves cheered enthusiastically as if we were the Nation's hope. London crowds were extraordinarily hysterical in the first few months of the South African War and entirely lost their usual sense of humour.

But if there was nothing heroic—and Heaven knows there was not—in my particular exhibition of patriotism, it was at least the means of bringing me a change of occupation and some new and valued friends.

Among these were William Archer and H. W. Fowler, the author of *The King's English* and translator with his brother of Lucian's *Dialogues*. We were generally able to arrange to share the same tent when we went into camp.

Another friend was Arthur R. Conder; he was some twenty years younger than I, and had not long taken his degree in Greats; he had won an exhibition at Worcester College, but, as I heard afterwards from another source, had resigned it in favour of the next candidate, who he thought needed it more. He was reading for the Bar when I met him, but as we became more intimate I found his real ambition was to be an author and readily undertook to advise on any manuscript he cared to let me see.

As a rule such an undertaking seldom gives any satisfaction to either party, so I was the more delighted to find that Conder's work showed far more than promise. I thought the short story he submitted to me so good that I sent it on to Burnand, who, as I fully expected he would, accepted it for *Punch*. Conder told me he was engaged on a novel, and when in November 1900 I read the completed manuscript, there was a freshness and humour in it that confirmed my belief that writing was his true vocation, and with his consent I submitted his story *The Seal of*

*Silence* to Reginald Smith, who agreed with me as to its merit and published it early in the following year.

Unhappily its author never saw his work in print. In January 1901, feeling run down and in need of a change, he went to Cannes, where he died suddenly on the 26th of that month.

I have no doubt whatever that if Arthur Conder had lived he would have made a name as a novelist; for so young a writer he showed quite remarkable powers of observation and description and a delicate and unforced humour. However, they were given no time to develop.

*The Seal of Silence* was well and sympathetically reviewed, and I think had a fairly satisfactory sale, but a single book, however great its promise, seldom survives its author long, and poor Conder, as I said, was dead before his appeared.

Other friends I made in those days were Oswald Barron, the witty and learned 'Londoner' of the *Evening News*, Frederic Kenyon (now Sir Frederic Kenyon and till recently Director and Principal Librarian of the British Museum), John D. Batten, the painter, Guy Pollock, and Arthur Webster, a son of Lord Alverstone. Webster was sergeant of my company, whose captain was Stuart Sankey—now Sir H. Stuart Sankey—and a very genial and popular captain he was.

We had ten days' training at Winchester School in Easter 1900, and a strenuous but thoroughly enjoyable fortnight under canvas that August at Ludgershall. Late in September, after a short stay with friends in Yorkshire and a few days in Edinburgh, I went with Alexander Wedderburn to the Paris Exhibition and on to Munich for the Passion Play at Oberammergau.

At the Exhibition a very popular feature was the South African Pavilion, which contained a bust of Kruger surrounded by garlands and an address of sympathy with him

for visitors to sign, an opportunity of which we did not avail ourselves, though every Frenchman seemed to have done so, for England was then at the zenith of her unpopularity on the Continent. However, in spite of our nationality we never during our three days in Paris met with the least discourtesy.

We arrived at Munich on Saturday the 29th of September, and went on that afternoon to Oberammergau, where we put up at the house of Rochus Lang, who, if I remember rightly, was Herod in the Passion Play, and to judge from the laughter of his customers in an inner room a man of infinite jest. Anton Lang, the Christus, was complying with innumerable requests from visitors to sign postcards, and I had a glimpse in a little shop in the village of St. John selling carved crucifixes.

The rooms were clean but the food very indifferent, while the charges were on the same scale as a first-class Munich hotel. At table d'hôte I remember a rather pretty American girl of sixteen or so with large kittenish eyes and a mutinously sullen mouth; with her was a feeble and faded French governess whom she treated with undisguised contempt and to all her attempts to engage her in French small talk never deigned any other reply than 'Quaw?', which had a devastating effect on her companion.

At 7.50 on Sunday morning we were in our seats for the first part of the Passion Play, which ended at 11.45. Over our heads was the span of a huge arch, but the auditorium nearest the stage was uncovered and above the lofty proscenium the tree tops were visible.

One could not be otherwise than deeply impressed by the sincerity of the actors and the devout emotion of the Bavarian peasants who formed the greater part of the audience. To them evidently it was not a show or spectacle but a religious ceremony, a picturing of events which for them had all the illusion of reality.

Some of the groupings and processions were extremely fine in colour and effect; the Christus was most dignified, gentle, and tender; such scenes as the entrance into Jerusalem, the Last Supper, and the Trial before Pilate were perfectly presented; the Crucifixion was harrowing in its sheer realism, and the Ascension extraordinarily impressive. The most fastidious mind could not have found anything jarring in the representation, the most unorthodox or irreverent could not have looked upon it unmoved.

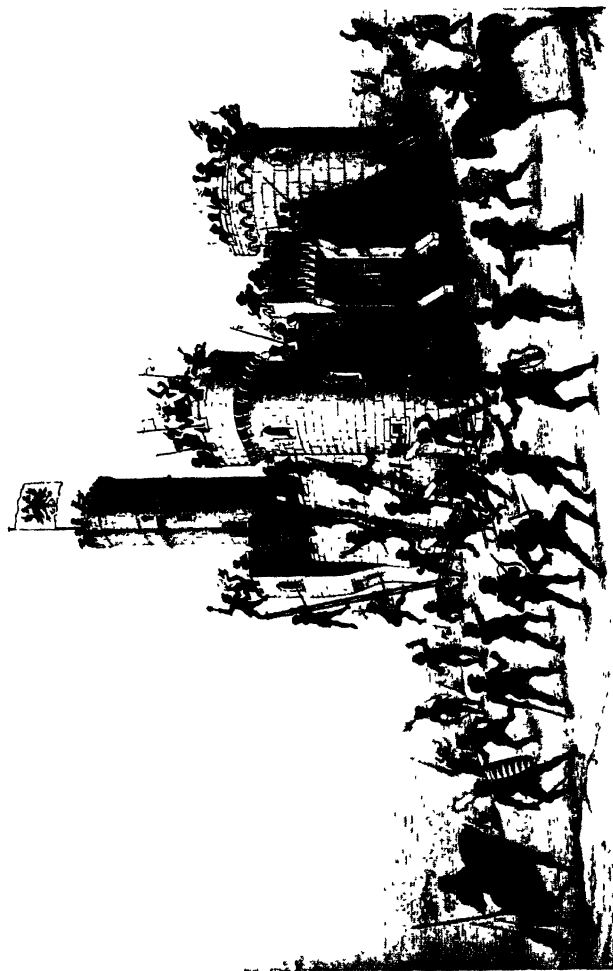
But I confess that I found the entire performance—the second part being the same length as the first—rather too long for my own taste, and that I thought the impressiveness of several scenes might have been heightened by more artistic lighting and arrangement generally.

I realize, of course, that what is essentially an expression of earnest faith should not be approached in this critical spirit, but the performance was so fine that I could not help wishing that it had been perfect in every detail, which thirty years ago it certainly was not.

From what I saw of the villagers in private life it was impossible not to like and respect them. The chief actors in the Passion Play showed no self-consciousness on or off the stage, and all the Oberammergau people had an air of simplicity, dignity, and good breeding and seemed quite unspoilt by publicity. It is true that they made all the money they could, but not to enrich themselves; all their profits I was told were applied to the improvement of the village and the expenses and upkeep of their beloved theatre. The population of Bavaria generally has always struck me as more attractive than that of any other continental country I know; genial, humorous, courteous, and honest.

No French and no other German comic paper is so genuinely humorous or so clean in its fun as the admirable *Fliegende Blätter*, whose Christmas annuals retain much of the spirit of Richter in their charming drawings.





Siege of a Castle  
Original drawing by Anstey Guthrie, 1894



Munich, which until the War was a gay and luxurious capital, had more and better toy shops and more ingenious and artistic toys than any other city of its size I know, there being something both child-loving and child-like in the Bavarian temperament.

Whether that can still be said I have no means of knowing.

We returned to Munich on Monday the 1st of October, and that evening went out after dinner to the broad Ludwigstrasse and joined the crowds in front of the Prince Regent's palace, where a dinner and reception were taking place in connexion with the wedding of the Regent's daughter with the King of the Belgians' grandson. Either they had been married that day or were to be married shortly.

Cumbrous and magnificent coaches, looking at least a century old, with white-plumed chasseurs on their boxes, rolled past preceded by outriders with staves, topped with lighted lanterns, supported on their thighs; then came banner-bearers pompously waving immense standards, followed by various choirs headed by illuminated signs 'Tenor I', 'Bass I', and so forth on poles and carrying lighted torches.

Lastly, a crimson velvet pulpit was set in front of the Palace and an orator made a long speech which I did not hear and could not have understood if I had. After which the choirs sang glees and serenades.

Through the long row of open windows on the first floor of the Palace we could see the crowd of richly dressed and jewelled women and uniformed and decorated men shifting to and fro under immense crystal chandeliers, and presently there were expectant murmurs from the spectators below followed by a roar of cheers as the bride and bridegroom appeared on a balcony hung with pale blue and white drapery and stood there bowing, the dull red torchlight striking scintillations from the diamonds on the

Princess's head and bosom, and heightening the crimson of the broad sash worn by the Prince.

The scene had the magical charm and romance of some incident in a story of Hans Andersen's; I felt very like Knud gazing a humble apprentice at the magnificent Joanna, or the Professor seeing the Shadow acclaimed as the husband of the Princess. I think, however, that the Professor had been executed before that event, and certainly no prince could have been less of a shadow than King Albert of Belgium.

It was well that no one either in the palace or street could foresee the autumn of fourteen years ahead and the four years of War which, if they brought ultimate triumph to Belgium, were to leave Bavaria humbled and impoverished.

Soon after the royal couple had left the balcony the crowd began to break up, the serenaders marched off in military formation, and in the centre of each square we passed on our way back to our hotel lay a blazing heap of their discarded torches.

While at Munich we saw the Museum, which I have often visited since and always consider more splendidly housed and arranged than any other I know, not even excepting our own Victoria and Albert.

We heard Ternina in *Fidelio* and *Lobengrin* at the old Opera House, and spent another evening at the booths and shows of the Oktober Fest fair, where scene and groups seemed to have been plagiarized from Richter's woodcuts.

From Munich we made the round of the late King Ludwig's palaces—Herren-Chiemsee, a reduced and slightly comic copy of Versailles, its gorgeous throne room and bedchambers imitated from those of Louis XIV, whose portraits and busts were everywhere. In the royal bed-chamber was an immense bed canopied with garter-blue velvet at the head of which blazed a golden sunburst, and

the wash-stand and toilet service were of pantomimic size. Only a Goliath could have lived up to that bedchamber.

We were shown a pink toilette room, the walls of which were fitted with innumerable candelabra of Meissen porcelain, where we were told King Ludwig, after returning across the lake at midnight in a boat shaped like a golden swan, would have all the candles lighted—there must have been over a hundred of them—and sit alone till daylight.

I remember describing this to a lady who was politely incredulous. 'Sit up all night,' she exclaimed, 'surrounded by mice and china! *Really!*' She had heard that the poor King was eccentric, but she could not believe that it went so far as that.

We went on to another palace at Neu-Schwanstein, a modern or mostly modern castle perched on a steep rock in a valley surrounded by desolate mountains; a fantastically romantic building with slender turrets, steep shining roofs, a connecting bridge high up in its walls spanning a cataract several hundred feet below—a castle which might have been a dream of Edgar Allen Poe. The interior was imposing but theatrical, furnished with more splendour than taste, and decorated with strenuous frescoes illustrating the Nibelungenlied in rather slap-dash colour.

Linderhof was the third palace we saw; it was on a far smaller scale than the other two and fussy in style, its rooms small and dark with Louis XIV's portraits as predominant as at Herren-Chiemsee; in the grounds, a Turkish kiosk with gaudy coloured windows and a cement grotto with sham stalactites. Altogether these palaces left one with an impression that the royal taste—except of course in music—was distinctly rococo.

But Ludwig must have been a picturesque and fascinating figure to his people, who adored him up to the tragic end of his unhappy life.

After leaving Munich we went on to Augsburg, Nuremberg, Rothenburg, Ansbach, and Wurzburg, and by Cologne to Brussels and home after three weeks, every day of which I wished longer.

For some months before this tour I had again become a constant contributor to *Punch* and my burlesque Babu novel *A Bayard from Bengal* was appearing that autumn as a serial in its pages.

On Monday the 29th of October the C.I.V. marched through the Strand to the Guildhall on their return from South Africa, and the Inns of Court Volunteers had the duty of lining the part of their route that was in front of the Law Courts. The crowd was tremendous and it was all we could do to keep the line until the procession had passed. Then an immense wave of people came surging in its wake; we were ordered to link arms and head them off up Bell Yard, but it was impossible to do so for long, and we were swept away by the rush and were not sorry to get the command to break our ranks—they were broken already—and re-form in Temple Gardens, where I felt thankful that I had brought both my helmet and rifle out of the scrimmage.

One of those returning C.I.V.s was, though I did not know it at the time, Douglas Hogg, now Lord Hailsham, who had gone out in the Mounted Infantry. A year or so later he joined our corps and was one of the sergeants in my Company; he was the only member of the battalion with the orange, white, and green ribbon and we were very proud of him. If we had known what a brilliant career he was about to enter on we should have been even more impressed, but he could not have been more liked than he was.

I had been at work on a short story which I afterwards called 'The Gull'. This I sent to the editor of *The Century*,

who cabled that it was unsuitable, after which I laid it aside for a couple of years and then condensed and re-wrote it, when it was a surprise and relief to me to find that it was accepted by *The Pall Mall Magazine*.

I was also writing a three-act play entitled *Hush-Money*, which J. M. Barrie, to whom I never went in vain for advice and help, kindly read and encouraged me to complete. But although I sent it to more than one manager it was always declined, and I soon recognized that the play lacked the quality necessary for success on the stage and thought no more of it.

Still, the latter half of the year 1900, although I had been by no means idle, could not be reckoned as anything but wasted time.

On Wednesday the 2nd of January 1901 Tenniel dined for the last time at the *Punch* table, having given up his position as cartoonist at the end of the previous year. Sir William Agnew proposed his health and Tenniel remarked half querulously, half humorously, 'I suppose I must reply. But you haven't drunk my health yet!', and after we had done so made a very short speech to the effect that he 'felt it better to retire before he was obliged', concluding abruptly with: 'Well—we won't prolong the agony; thank you all very much.' Burnand, invited to speak by Agnew, declined on the ground that after Tenniel's speech anything he could say would be an anticlimax.

The sight of Tenniel's one eye had already begun to fail, but he did not become completely blind until some years later.

On Tuesday the 22nd of January Her Majesty Queen Victoria died. I stood on some slightly rising ground opposite Grosvenor Gate to see the funeral procession but could only catch an occasional glimpse, first of the heads and busbies of the Hussars, the helmets of the Royal Field Artillery, Dragoons, and Life Guards, then the

gold-laced caps of postillions, and through a momentary gap in the crowd the Royal coffin on which a crown was set on a crimson cushion. I could recognize even at some distance King Edward and the ex-Kaiser, and the cortège ended with a body of German dragoons in black-plumed helmets and long grey cloaks.

The vast crowds who saw that last passing of their Queen felt more than the natural sorrow for the beloved Sovereign who had been on the throne before all but a very few spectators had been born; there was a quite perceptible sense that with her the nation's prosperity and security had also departed.

I heard one man say to his neighbour as the King passed: 'Ah, you take my word he won't have such a peaceful time as his predecessor—not by a long way he won't!', a view which in one form or another I heard from various speakers. As a matter of fact, of course, the general pessimism was not justified during King Edward's reign—mainly owing to his efforts to restore friendly relations with other Powers—but on the 2nd of February 1901 the English public undoubtedly felt that not only change but danger lay in the immediate future.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle urged me to make a comedy out of my dialogue story *The Man from Blankley's*, which had had some success on its appearance in *Punch*, and Arthur Blunt (the admirable actor who, under the stage name of 'Arthur Cecil', was the chief character in *The Magistrate*, *The Schoolmistress*, and other of Sir Arthur Pinero's brilliant farces) gave me the same advice when we met at Pontresina in 1894.

But, as I said to both of them, the difficulty in the way of dramatic treatment was the dinner-party. It could not possibly be left out of the play, and yet if a long dinner-table were placed parallel to the footlights, half at least of the guests would have their backs to the audience and

would 'mask' the faces of the other six guests; if at a right-angle to the footlights, only the two characters sitting on the right and left of their host would be visible at all.

Blunt admitted that he could see no way of avoiding this dilemma, and it was not till the summer of 1899 that I saw what struck me as a possible solution. I was cycling back from Gerrard's Cross one afternoon, and, I suppose, thinking of Doyle's and Blunt's suggestions, when it suddenly occurred to me—mightn't it work with a round table instead of an oblong one?

And when I got home and made a plan with a round table I decided that it disposed of most of the difficulty, and began a scenario at once.

On the 28th of October I left the first draft of Act I and the outline of Acts II and III at Charles Hawtrey's offices in the Haymarket, with every expectation of hearing that my play was unsuited for stage purposes.

After that I heard nothing for five weeks, at the end of which I had a letter from Hawtrey asking me to call and see him. I did so and, to my surprise, found that he had considerable faith in the play, and was prepared to accept it if the second and third acts proved to be as good as the first.

He came to see me a fortnight later, when I read him the completed play, and he was so favourably impressed that he agreed to produce it at the end of the run of *A Message from Mars*. But that admirable play proved so successful that it was not until the spring of 1901 that *The Man from Blankley's* was put in rehearsal.

Rehearsals are apt to be a great strain on everybody concerned in them, but I found those at the Prince of Wales' rather enjoyable than otherwise. Charles Hawtrey was an admirable producer, tactful, always good-humoured, and perfectly polite, but managing to be obeyed as though he were the most violent of autocrats.

The company was an excellent one, and though the

majority of them were not very hopeful of the play being a success, they all did their best to make it so. The dinner-table Act was of course the most dangerous one, and I was repeatedly pressed to substitute a horse-shoe table for the round one so as to enable all the characters' faces to be seen. But I objected that the Tidmarshes were the last people to adopt such a piece of furniture, that I had gone pretty far as it was in giving them a round table, and that the horse-shoe would inevitably suggest either a banquet in the Bayeux tapestry, or a nigger minstrel entertainment. And in the end I prevailed.

The dress rehearsal was a depressing affair—most dress rehearsals are, but I didn't know that then; there were some forty or fifty people in the stalls and dress circle, and not one of them so much as smiled throughout the play. But when I found that they were absorbed in sketching and making notes of the costumes I was a little less discouraged.

On the day of the first performance, Thursday the 25th of April, I arrived at the Prince of Wales' just before the curtain went up, and heard from Hawtrey that Mr. Arthur Williams, who was to have played Tidmarsh, had met with an accident and had just sent word that he would be unable to appear.

This would have wrecked the play if his part had had to be read by his understudy, who was Mr. Henry Ford. But fortunately for us, his mother, Miss Lottie Venne, had advised him to make himself letter-perfect in his lines before the production, and, though he was a young actor at that time, he played 'Tidmarsh' so well on the first night that I would not consent to let him be replaced during the run, as he had undoubtedly saved the play from disaster.

The first night was a distinct success; there were calls for the author at the end, and, by my own desire, Hawtrey explained that I was 'not in the house'; though of course





Photo: Dover St. Studios

The Dinner Scene in *The Man from Blankley's*  
Taken during the revival at the Haymarket Theatre, 1906-7

found a very ingenious solution in a Servants' Ball in which the house-party would naturally take part, and we wrote the play together.

It was accepted by Arthur Bouchier on condition that we reduced it from three acts to two and altered the second act from Comedy to Farce, which we unwisely consented to do. Then, after a considerable time, as Bouchier seemed to have less belief in the play and could not be induced to fix even an approximate date for production, we cancelled the contract and withdrew the play.

Later George Giddens read and liked it and it was produced at the Royalty on the 8th of November 1902, but only ran a fortnight. I had never been very sanguine about it myself and I do not think that in its altered and incongruous form it deserved a better fate.

In 1902 I wrote another serial for *The Strand Magazine*, a story for children, which I called 'Only Toys'.

A publisher friend of mine had asked me some time before to promise him the book rights of the next children's story I wrote, and although Reginald Smith, who in 1902 represented his late father-in-law's firm, was anxious to publish *Only Toys*, I was bound by my previous undertaking.

This was unfortunate because, although Messrs. Newnes paid me £446 3s. 3d. for the serial rights, I got no more than £130 in advance of royalties for *Only Toys* in book form. On or about the date of its publication its publisher became a bankrupt and the Receiver in Bankruptcy, exercising the power that he then had—for the Law has been altered since—sold off all the copies to the Trade at reduced prices. I saw several in booksellers' windows myself priced at eighteen-pence instead of the customary four and sixpence, soon after the book was to appear. I doubt whether the Receiver troubled himself much about sending copies for review; at all events

I did not get many notices nor, of course, any advertisements.

It was simply bad luck and I considered myself fortunate in the circumstances to have secured any sum in advance of royalties.

A few years ago I asked the late Sir John Murray whether he would consider a new edition of the book, as I had found I could acquire the electrotypes of Mr. H. R. Millar's admirable illustrations for, I think, forty pounds. But, after reading the book, Sir John decided that it was too out of date to have any appeal to modern children, and I gave up all idea of reviving it. On the whole *Only Toys* cannot be considered to have done anything to improve my standing with the public.

Some twenty years ago Mr. Whelan, who was Sir Herbert Tree's adviser, was very anxious that I should dramatize the book for His Majesty's, and Tree, whom I had known before he became an actor, asked me to do a scenario for him and invited me to lunch in the Dome Room of his theatre, after which my scenario was read to him. He seemed interested and made one or two excellent suggestions, but I was never very confident myself, as the story required the two chief characters to be on the stage throughout; if these characters were played by children they would almost certainly be unable to carry the play; if by grown-ups the childish effect would be inevitably lost.

So that I was rather relieved when, a few weeks later, Tree asked me to call at the theatre, and dreamily conveyed that he had come to the conclusion that the play would be more suited to a smaller stage than his own.

After which I wasted no more time over it.

The Coronation of King Edward VII was to take place on the 24th or 25th of June 1902, and on the 15th of

May, when I went down to Great Brickhill, I had heard nothing whatever to indicate that His Majesty was not in his usual health. Nevertheless I had a vivid dream that night of which I made the following record the next morning: 'Bad dreams about Coronation, a lowering coppery sky and one rent of dark blue sky with stars shining. General dismay and apprehension. Then a big hall with banners suddenly let down like a stage set.'

It impressed me sufficiently to note it down, but I did not regard it in the least as ominous. Like most people I had often heard the probably mythical tale of the gipsy's prophecy to him when Prince of Wales that he 'would live to be King but not to be crowned', and a subconscious recollection of this in sleep had no doubt produced the dream. Also, although I have on several occasions dreamed that a relation or friend was dead, in only one case had the dream come true.

So for at least a month I thought no more of this particular dream. I came up to London for the Coronation and to take part with the I.C.R.V. in a Volunteer Review at Aldershot on the 16th of June. We slept the previous night at Bisley, reveille was at 4.15 a.m. the next morning, and we started for Laffan's Plain at 5.30 in heavy rain and got to Aldershot at 9.

After waiting about till close upon three we formed into column, preceded I think by the London Scottish, Civil Service, and Artists' Corps, and plodded painfully over a mile or so of slippery and unsavoury ground till we reached the saluting point, when we noticed that although the Review was to have been attended by the King and Queen, the royal carriage was occupied by the Queen alone.

And when we got to Waterloo that evening, the contents sheets displayed in huge type: 'Indisposition of the King. Serious Rumours. Complications feared.' Then reassuring reports; no truth in the rumours, the King was

out motoring that day but had had a slight attack of lumbago and so was unable to be at the Review.

On the 19th there was an official announcement that he had been 'ordered to rest before the strain of the Coronation', but it was not until Tuesday the 24th of June that a bulletin announced that the King was suffering from perityphlitis and that a surgical operation was necessary.

Not only was the Coronation indefinitely postponed but for a few anxious days it seemed hardly possible that the King could recover. The commissionaire at the Mansions where I had a flat came back from the Camp in Kensington Gardens on the evening of the 25th with the news that the C.O. had been told by special messenger that the King was sinking fast, whereupon all the canteens had been closed at 8.30. Which I had no doubt, seeing that the commissionaire was a particularly temperate and excellent fellow, was neither invented nor imagined by him. Later that night came reports that the King was dead, and it was not until Saturday the 5th of July, after I had returned to Great Brickhill, that he was declared out of danger and all anxiety was happily at an end.

But while it lasted I own that on several occasions I recalled that dream of mine with growing uneasiness. Fortunately my subconscious self was as poor a prophet as the gipsy, if she ever existed.

On the actual night of the Coronation I was standing in the crowd in front of Buckingham Palace. Near me was a respectable artisan with a younger man, to whom I heard him say, with the air of one who knew more than most, 'D'yer know the *truth* about this Coronation?' 'Well,' said the other, 'come to that, I dunno as I do.' 'Why,' explained the artisan, 'they've 'urried it up, see? So as to secure the Crown for 'is successor, the Prince o' Wiles. Mind yer,' he added, 'that's on'y my opinion, but it's what I think.'

And others than he must have had hazy ideas concerning

the devolution of the Sovereignty, for about the same time some one asked me if it was really true that if the King's illness had proved fatal the Kaiser would have been our next ruler, and when I corrected this impression said that she hadn't believed it herself, though she obviously had, but that she had heard it said.

That August *A Bayard from Bengal* was published by Messrs. Dent, and very favourably reviewed. But the sales were very small.

At my hotel at Genoa on that autumn tour my table was next to that of some Americans who had only just arrived in Europe and were discussing their plans. One of the party, a man, was doubtful whether they should include Venice because, he said, 'When you've been on the sea for a fortnight you don't wawnt a sea-place, you wawnt more of a change,' but decided that he could always get away up to the mountains 'if Venice isn't all right'. Then they discussed a certain young lady whom they had met on board the liner and who, it seemed, was a walking advertisement of the advantages of a Boston High School education. 'Her mind', said one enthusiastic lady, 'is trained superbly; she's gotten it under complete command. And she's so wonderfully receptive, takes in everything and twice as much as anybody else can. And so ca'm and self-possessed with it all!'

'I don't think', put in a man, 'she's diffused it in the direction of her mother much.'

'Well, no,' said the enthusiastic lady judicially. 'Mrs. — is a vurry ignorant woman, she's never had any education, but she's a real respect for knowledge. There are many things that Miss — too is curiously ignorant of. But look at the way she's mastered French! Her pronunciation is atrocious but she's purrfect command of it. Her appearance is against her, certainly—when she and her mother first came on board I thought I'd never seen

anything like them—but—well, they grow on you somehow.'

At Venice that October I was fortunate in coming upon my old friends the Augustine Birrells, by whom I was taken to tea with the Edens in their lovely garden by the Giudecca. Mrs. Eden told us how the Campanile had fallen in July. On the night before it was reported to be in danger and the prefect and syndics had stopped the band, the bell-ringing, and the nine o'clock gun, to the disgust of the Venetians, who had not realized that the case was so serious. The next morning, only half an hour after some experts had gone up to the top to examine the mischief and got down safely, all the pigeons suddenly flew away in terror and streams of dust began to pour through cracks; then the Campanile slowly crumbled down almost on its own base, the pavements of the Piazza were several inches deep in dust and the air as thick and dark as a November fog. All the shops were closed in token of mourning and Mrs. Eden saw many people crying bitterly.

Almost immediately it was decided to raise a new tower, which it took many years to do. The present Campanile is as majestic as the old one and looks already as though it had dominated Venice for centuries instead of for some twenty years.

I remember Birrell giving me some reminiscences of actors, one of a comedian, who becoming confidential after dinner said: 'My one dream—the dream of my life—was to be an Old Bailey barrister. "Oh, to be that!" I was always thinking. And for that purpose, slowly, painfully, I saved two hundred pounds. But my father—and a dearer, better father no man ever had on this earth—had one unfortunate failing. *No* property was safe from him—not even an umbrella. So he took my two hundred pounds, and I lost for ever all prospect of becoming an Old Bailey barrister. But—please God—my son shall be one!'

I came back to town and for three weeks or so was engaged in depressing and extremely trying rehearsals of *Lyre and Lancet* at the Royalty, with very little hope that the play could possibly succeed, and although I was not surprised by its early collapse I was certainly discouraged for a day or two. It was not soothing to be congratulated on its success by well-meaning friends and assured that they were intending to go and see it long after its short career had ended. However, I found consolation in my *Punch* work.

At luncheon with some friends about this time I heard a story which pleased me: A lady said to her Swiss butler, 'Really, you have been so unsatisfactory of late that I'm afraid we shall have to part.' To which he replied: 'Very well. Afder all, it vill pe easy. Ve are nod married.'

Which reminds me of a converse incident. A certain high-spirited and practical-joking family I knew slightly had a dignified butler whom they believed to be devoted to them. So that it was an unpleasant shock when he told his employer one morning that he wished to leave his service. He was pressed to give his reasons for doing so, and after some hesitation said: 'Well, Sir, if you *must* know, I've got to 'ate the sight of you and the 'ole family.'

The first half of 1903 was far from productive. I contributed at intervals to *Punch* and went to the Law Courts and various places in search of material without result. I also began one or two stories only to find that for some reason or other the idea would not work satisfactorily.

A considerable part of these months was taken up by volunteer duty at the rifle-range, drills, route marches, and in camp, which I found a welcome distraction from more or less futile literary efforts.

In August I went to Munich and on to Vienna, where at the 'Bristol' I found Charles Hawtrey with Mrs. Petre and her brother, and we went to a music-hall and after-



wards to the Prater together. Charles was opening early in September at the Garrick in New York with *The Man from Blankley's* and told me how the actress who was to play 'Marjory' had said to him: 'It won't be me in a smart Paris frock,' to which he had replied: 'My dear child, if I thought it was going to be you, I shouldn't engage you.' We were talking of the *Message from Mars* and I said that I thought one of his happiest effects was in the last Act when, still uncertain whether the dream was true and he was penniless, he felt for his note-case and on finding it and its contents intact expressed his relief in a long slow smile. 'As a matter of fact,' he said, 'that was almost an accident. On the first night I had some trouble in finding the case and was afraid they'd forgotten to put it in the coat. I had a line to say, but as I found it wasn't needed I left it out on purpose.'

Early in the play on the first night he had fallen and put his shoulder out, but although in intense pain had carried on as if nothing was the matter and obtained his most brilliant success.

I remember his telling me the next evening, while I was taking him to see the Eisenstock or Apprentices' tree, of another play that had been submitted to him which was excellent in its dialogue and had impressed him favourably until the chief character won the girl with whom he was in love by threatening to expose her father as a forger. 'When I came to that,' said Charles, 'I chucked it aside but took it up again later to see whether there might be some explanation. But there wasn't, so I had to send it back.'

I dined out rather frequently in those pre-War years and generally found it enjoyable. But there was one occasion in the autumn of 1903 when I found the lady I had taken in somewhat of a terror. She was a painfully bright and brainy American whose conversational standard proved hopelessly above my reach. I began with a remark that

certainly was lacking in originality, but anyway it served, I thought, as an opening. She turned beady black eyes on me and replied reproachfully, 'Well, Mr. Anstey, I did not expect to hear anything so banal from *you!*'

I said I would try again, and I did, but with no better success for she said, 'No, Mr. Anstey, I'm vurry sorry but I cann't think that was worthy of you either.' After which she discoursed to me on the density of Englishmen and their curious insensibility to American humour, as exemplified by their resentment of hers on board the liner. Then she enlarged on the disadvantages of being a Somebody and the advantages of being a mere nobody like herself. 'For instance,' she said, 'I know all about you. I've read your works' (which I took the liberty of secretly disbelieving), 'but you know nothing about me, whether I'm musical or religious or anything else. Now it's really your turn to say something. I cann't go on like this for ever!' So I had my turn and felt myself becoming more dismally banal under those petrifying eyes with every sentence.

At last she gave me up, to my intense relief, and turned to her right-hand neighbour, who was Anthony Hawkins. I thought she would be unusually hard to satisfy if she found him other than entertaining, but I soon heard her accusing him, too, of banality, which went some way towards repairing my shattered self-esteem.

Then she decided to give me one more chance and did so by observing, 'There's one thing I notice about your English dinner-parties and that is you're all so elderly.'

I looked round the table and had to admit that we were none of us in our first youth. But no more was she for that matter. 'I'm afraid we are a bit elderly, now you mention it,' I said. 'What do you do with people like us in America?' 'Why, in *my* country,' she said severely, 'they all stop at home. Our parties are only for the young.'

I said that struck me as an admirable arrangement and

just then our hostess gave the signal and we parted. I did not resume the conversation upstairs—I was too frightened—and I noticed that other men who had been presented to her showed no anxiety to be tried and found wanting once more; she sat alone, like Royalty.

But I've no doubt that she went away that evening with the gratifying conviction that she had had an intellectual triumph and a brilliant social success. And perhaps she had.

At one of the *Punch* dinners I heard a story which, as I do not think it has appeared elsewhere, may be worth setting down here. A bishop while walking in a wood with his chaplain and a lay friend came upon what he declared to be an edible fungus. He ate a portion of this himself and offered another to his chaplain, who did not venture to refuse. But the layman when invited to partake said, 'Thank you, my lord, but I'm not in your diocese.'

One October day in 1903 I had been cycling from the farm-house at Five Ashes where I was staying, and come round by Wadhurst and Lamberhurst to Frant, at the inn of which I stopped to lunch.

In the bar-room on a stool by the counter sat an elderly rustic, generally referred to as 'Ole Jack', who seemed to be a kind of village Falstaff. He was fresh-coloured, with thin grey hair and beard and two yellow tusks in his upper jaw; he wore a yellow linen jacket, brown corduroy waistcoat and black moleskin trousers, and a cheerier and more shamelessly unrepentant old rascal I have never met.

As I came in he was asking the barman to supply him with another pint. 'No fear, Jack!' said the barman. 'I've got my orders, and I don't serve you with another pint for two hours yet.'

'It's gettin' very near that now,' said Ole Jack persuasively, but without effect.

A highly respectable female villager here burst into voluble praises of her husband—obviously for the benefit of Ole Jack.

'Now he *is* respected,' she said. 'Go anywhere you will, they'll speak a good word for *him*, they will!'

'Speak a good word!' remarked Ole Jack, beerily impervious, 'that ain't anything, that ain't! It's what a man can *do*!'

'And there's nothing my 'usband *can't* do,' said the woman, 'orses, diggin', or whatever it is, he can turn his hand to anything, *he* can!'

'Let 'im!' said Ole Jack.

'Ah, and I can tell you *this*,' was the reply, 'you orter be ashamed o' yourself, you ought, settin' there all day doin' nothin'!'

'I ain't doin' nothin', ' said Ole Jack. 'I'm a settin' 'ere waitin' fer my wife, that's what *I*'m doin', ' an explanation which was received with a general chorus of incredulity.

'I tell yer I am,' said Ole Jack. 'She tole me for to meet 'er 'ere at eight o'clock, when she'll 'ave done 'er Saturday shoppin'. An' so I'm a-goin' to.'

'Ah,' said the woman, '*my* 'usband give me a sovereign this very mornin' to do *my* shoppin' with!'

'Pity 'e didn't know no better!' was Ole Jack's comment.

'That's *your* opinion! But there's *another* thing I can tell you—you ought to know better than to let your pore wife (as is wearin' 'erself to a shadder and'll soon be in her grave) meet you in a public 'ouse like this!'

'I don' think so,' said Ole Jack. '*You*'re in a public 'ouse, ain't you? Look 'ere—will you stand treat fur a pot?'

'Certainly not! The idea of asking a woman to pay for liquor!' And she went out indignantly.

After she had gone Ole Jack remarked to the company generally, 'D'you know, I wouldn' mind spendin' a tanner

on makin' 'er tight,' only to be derided for imagining that so small a sum would have that effect on any woman.

'I dunno,' said he, 'I dessay you're right. But I'd risk a tanner on 'er, I would. And it's 'bout time you drew me another tuppenny!' he reminded the barman.

'Not by another hour and three-quarters, it ain't,' said the barman. 'You look at that clock.'

'Ah, well,' said Ole Jack, 'it don't matter—it don't matter. 'Cos Muster Williams 'ere is agoin' to lemme 'ave a drink out of 'is pint, 'e is!'

But Muster Williams disabused him of this impression by saying, somewhat cryptically but with decision, 'If the *tap* ain't freezed, I 'ave!' and Ole Jack resigned himself, quite contentedly, to watching the clock hands.

At an adjoining table I had already noticed a young man who had been listening to this conversation with rather ostentatious amusement. He had a showy sort of good looks, though he seemed to have lost muscular control of his eyes and lips; he wore a smart grey suit and an imitation Panama hat, and I thought that he was probably a member of some touring company, as proved presently to be the fact.

'Quite amusing the conversation of these rustics, eh?' he said to me. 'I like to study them occasionally. I've just come here by train from Tunbridge Wells. I'm—ah—appearing there at the Theatre Royal. . . . No, I should like to say we were doing good business, but—well, the fact is the prices of admission are too high to pay. Not only that, but our show is too refined for the people, if you know what I mean. Give 'em a sixpenny gallery and a two-bob dress circle, and they might come in. As it is, well, they *don't*. But a rank melodrama is what *they* want. Talking of melodrama, *do* you suppose for a single moment that Blank Blank is capable of writing such a play as *The Worst Woman in London*? Blank Blank, indeed! Why, he can hardly sign his own name! *be* write that play!

Ha-ha!' (and he laughed stagily) 'it's too ridiculous! Now I *have* written melodramas, for the Standard Theatre, toured one of them for two years, *The Golden Chance* it was called—daresay you've heard of it—and I did very well with it, too. And then, owing to trouble, domestic relations, and things of that sort and what not, I sold the rights for a hundred pounds like a fool and the play's on tour still, and making pots of money!'

He was still in the bar-room when I left, but whether Ole Jack succeeded in touching him for another pint before the appointed hour I naturally could not say. But I think it not improbable.

## XII

1904-1908

ON a Monday in May 1904 I was at the Royal Literary Fund Dinner and my right-hand neighbour was Miss Marie Corelli. Being guiltily conscious that I was not as familiar with her work as I should have been, I was a little apprehensive at first, but fortunately we did not touch on that subject and I had an impression that she was no better acquainted with my own performances.

She was extraordinarily youthful both in looks and manner, and very voluble and agreeable, talking much of Stratford and her opposition to the erection of a tablet to Lady Martin in the chancel of the parish church, of her friendship with King Edward and how she was going to Buckingham Palace the next day to show him some plans, of the stupidity of the Stratford Council and their blank stares when she informed them that Shakespeare's name was venerated all over the world; Dogberrys and Shallows she assured me were to be met in Stratford streets to that day, and then she told me of the pair of ponies she drove herself which could do eight miles an hour with ease.

I had little to do but listen and the time passed very pleasantly. Barrie made one of his most telling speeches in which he described the popular author as 'dancing with the Evening Star, whose eyes, it may be, are moist with regret that her partner is not one of the unsuccessful or forgotten'.

Edmund Gosse was at the dinner, and, in his peculiar fashion, was very complimentary to me afterwards: 'I am about your on—I mean your *greatest* admirer,' he told me, 'I read you constantly—in fact, it's one of my vices.'

He could not resist being a trifle feline in his amenities,

but I knew that he really did like my work, and in his book on 'Ibsen' had gone out of his way to mention my irreverent parody of that dramatist with warm appreciation, which, considering Gosse's share in making his plays known in England, was more than might have been expected.

In August 1904 I went to Bad Gastein, not to take the cure there, but mainly because I had met the Henry Cunninghams at Salzburg the year before, on their way to Gastein, and had heard from them that it was delightful. It certainly is a remarkably picturesque little place with its little houses and huge hotels clustered on either side of a deep ravine down which a cataract foams with a deep organ note.

I stayed at the Gasteiner-hof and should have been solitary enough but for J. C. Parkinson of the *World*, whom I knew slightly and who kindly introduced me to his circle of friends at the Badeschloss. There were walks, picnics, or expeditions of some sort on most days and dinners and bridge parties in the evenings, in all of which I took part.

Towards the end of our stay one of these friends entertained us all at dinner at the Straubinger; among the guests were a married couple; the husband a handsome, genial, voluble man perpetually telling experiences of his own which were designed to show his importance and his intimacy with the great, and generally revealing himself as something of a fool; his wife was a somewhat acid lady—evidently a personage in Sydenham where they lived—who did not disguise her contempt for his exuberances.

There came a moment when he felt impelled to make a speech. He really must, he told us, express his sense of the elegant hospitality they had enjoyed that evening (which was his usual style). And he was most anxious that this brilliant party should meet together again and



that the meeting should take place under his own roof. So he would take this opportunity of inviting the whole company to dine with his wife and himself on that day two months if they would do him that honour.

His wife's face during this had expressed horrified disapproval and at last she could control herself no longer. 'George!' she cried sharply, 'how *can* you be so rash and absurd!' George protested feebly that he was not aware of being either. 'Of course it's absurd,' she retorted. 'As if any one could see so far ahead, and November, too! Why for all you know there may be a fog! How are they all going to catch trains to Sydenham, and where can we accommodate them in our little cottage if they have to stay the night?'

Here Parkinson, possessed by a devil of mischief, assured her that we would risk the chances of a fog and were delighted to accept the invitation, at which she protested hysterically that she was no party to it. George attempted to save the situation by remarking, 'I'm sure my wife is as anxious to extend our hospitality as I am myself,' whereupon she rose hastily and said, 'I think we must be going,' and left.

The next day George met us with 'I bring all sorts of kind messages from my wife' (which somehow did not carry conviction) and repeated his invitation for November 30th.

In October we received written invitations to this festival, but somehow all of us were unavoidably prevented from attending it, which I daresay George thought an extraordinary coincidence. And probably his wife told him that it was only what he might have expected.

At Gastein I thought I should like to try the baths but was warned that before doing so I had better consult the resident doctor. So I did, and his first question puzzled me for a moment, for he asked, 'Haf you any gauzes?' It

seemed that he meant to inquire whether I had any tendency to flatulence, and I was able to assure him that I had no gauzes. After further examination he pronounced with a touch of disapproval 'You haf nossing', and I was free of the baths.

These were in the basement of my hotel: one went into a sort of cell, lighted by a small window high up in one of the walls. Some steps led down into the bath, which was sunk to the level of the floor, and one sat up to the neck for a quarter of an hour in warm water of a lovely blue tint which produced a faint tingling sensation. As there was nothing the matter with me I obtained no benefit from the cure, which is said to be efficacious in certain complaints, though I never discovered which they were.

At Frankfort on my way home I made the acquaintance of the late Colonel Croft-Lyons; we went the round of the antiquity shops there and at Cologne together, and also to the splendid exhibition of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century art at Düsseldorf. He was not only a well-known connoisseur and collector but a most genial and amusing companion, so it was a fortunate meeting for me.

At Cologne one afternoon I was exploring a little street near the Dom Platz when in one of a row of Alterthumer-handlungen shops I saw an exceptionally good glass painting, the portrait of an eighteenth-century Elector in State robes; I asked the proprietor its price and I was told it was ten marks, the equivalent of ten shillings in those days. That was moderate enough, but the picture was unframed and I went away without buying. I had hardly got into another street, however, before I repented; the picture was well worth the money and I could pack it so as to be safe from breakage, and have it reframed in London. So I went back, as I imagined, to the shop and told the proprietor I would take the glass painting at his price. He seemed to me to be the man I had seen before,

but he denied all knowledge of an Elector's portrait. So I tried the man next door, who on the whole seemed even more like my man, but he declared he wasn't.

The little street was full of antiquity shops and I tried every one of them without success, then every dealer in all the neighbouring streets and passages, for by this time that glass painting had begun to seem a most desirable acquisition, but always in vain—I left Cologne without recovering my lost Elector. However, he made me richer by ten guineas, as he furnished me with the subject for a *Punch* article.

In the lounge of the Dom-hof there was an automatic machine for supplying picture postcards, and one evening I saw an American inserting several ten pfennig pieces in succession and becoming more and more indignant as the machine made no response. At last a waiter stepped forward and showed him what to do to obtain the postcards, which were promptly produced. 'Oh, is *that* so?' said the American. 'I thought maybe the day-arned thing was put here for re-*ven*-you.'

That waiter was a friendly soul; once when I was consulting the speise-karte at dinner he came to my rescue by sympathetically advising: 'Vynod haf som bease-budding?' *'Ome-like!'*

However, I was not so nostalgic as all that.

In December that year I went to see John Tenniel at Portsdown Road, when he told me of his hunting experiences with John Leech and Anthony Trollope, and how Leech had confessed one day that Tenniel took jumps which he would not attempt, and how Trollope was a reckless rider and would ride at a gate while it was being opened. The sight of Tenniel's remaining eye had begun to trouble him but he said he could see fairly well with strong glasses. He showed me some charmingly delicate illustrations he was doing in water-colour for *The*

*Tempest* and *Mercbant of Venice* merely for his own amusement. 'My work is done,' he said.

Then he talked about the horses he had had, of one he had ridden for sixteen years, of a mare whose mouth had been 'spoilt by a stupid and cruel groom' and who had bolted with him when riding by the Regent's Park Canal; he had just managed to turn her into a small courtyard where he dismounted and soothed her, then he had got on again and been bolted with once more. 'And after that,' he said, 'she always bolted and I had to get rid of her.'

I think he had given up riding for two or three years before he retired from *Punch*, but for the greater part of his long life he rode regularly and he was comically disgusted whenever he saw Owen Seaman, Sambourne, Rudy Lehmann, Partridge, Reed, and me on bicycles. 'Can't think how you can let yourselves be seen on the beastly things!' he would tell us.

Beyond occasional articles for *Punch* I produced nothing in 1904, though I was constantly, both in that year and for many years afterwards, trying to hit upon a subject for a book, thinking I had found one, making elaborate scenarios and then coming reluctantly to the conclusion that they were unworkable. Over and over again I had the depressing feeling that both invention and humour were finally exhausted and that never again should I hit upon an idea which I could carry out with the least success or enjoyment.

It was not quite so bad as that, for early in 1905 I wrote a story in two parts, 'Mrs. Brassington-Claypott's Children's Party,' which rather to my surprise I found had amused one or two friends when it appeared in *Punch*. And a little later something I happened to say to Burnand at the Table gave me an idea for a monkey story, which I wrote with all the old zest and which gained hearty approval not only from him but several of my colleagues.

In March 1905 I was subpoena'd to give evidence in the case of *Fraser v. Edwardes*, which was heard by Lord Darling, then Mr. Justice Darling, in King's Bench Court 5.

A Captain Fraser of the Indian Army had submitted to George Edwardes the libretto of a musical comedy he had written called *The Hanji-Habn*, the scene of which was laid in Cashmere. Edwardes had given some sort of promise to produce it if Captain Fraser would introduce a comedy part for Mr. Huntley Wright, and Captain Marshall the dramatist suggested to Captain Fraser that this part might be based on my *Babu Jabberjee*, and went with Captain Fraser to buy a copy of the book. Apparently nothing more was done, for the part was never written.

Then, how long afterwards I forget, George Edwardes produced *The Cingalee* at the Gaiety. It had an Indian setting, the scene being Ceylon, and Mr. Huntley Wright appeared in it as a Babu. Whereupon Captain Fraser brought an action for damages against George Edwardes, claiming that *The Cingalee* was inspired by *The Hanji-Habn*.

James Tanner was the author of the libretto of *The Cingalee*, and while he was writing it had come to me with a proposal from George Edwardes that I should revise the Babu English lines for a fee. At that time I knew nothing about the Fraser play and agreed to do what was necessary. Accordingly I re-wrote Mr. Huntley Wright's lines in the first act, but on seeing the altered script I found that very few of my alterations had been adopted and decided to withdraw, leaving them free to use as much as I had done, but declining any fee or to have my name printed on the programmes, &c.

That was my only connexion with the case, and how my evidence could have helped George Edwardes I could not understand. It was not given, however, for his counsel, Charles Gill, decided at the last moment that it was not

necessary to call me. Still, I was in Court during every day of the proceedings, which had many amusing incidents.

Captain Fraser had stated in the witness-box that Edwardes had told him that what he (Fraser) wanted was 'a stage carpenter'. 'Did you understand,' asked Darling, 'that he meant a man with a saw?'

'Oh no, my lord,' said Fraser, 'I quite understood that he referred to the construction of my play.'

'A man who would touch it up, polish, and so forth?' suggested Darling, and Captain Fraser replied very quietly, 'I didn't understand the polish, my lord.'

His counsel gave a list of alleged similarities in the two plays and Charles Gill had remarked that anybody could discover similarities in any two plays whatever.

'Can they?' said Darling. 'Then, Mr. Gill, will you bring me a list on Monday of the similarities between *Henry V* and *Peter Pan*? And on the Monday, Gill, with Charles Brookfield's assistance, actually did furnish the list.

Brookfield was one of the witnesses for the defence, and he and Gill had evidently pre-arranged their respective questions and answers.

'You have read the Plaintiff's play, I believe?' Gill asked and Brookfield said that he had. 'Well,' Gill went on, 'and did you find any evidence of originality in it?'

'I could find no instance of humour, invention, or ability, nor any sense of construction or dramatic effect,' said Brookfield, 'except—' (and here he affected to consider conscientiously) 'except in the list of parallel passages drawn up in the Statement of Claim, and that I presume was written by Captain Fraser's solicitors!'

Here Bankes remarked: 'One moment. I haven't got all that down yet!' on which Darling, who was convulsed, said to Brookfield, 'It's the best thing that's been said yet, so perhaps you won't mind repeating it.'

In cross-examination Bankes said, 'Do I understand,

Mr. Brookfield, that you damn both *The Hanji-Habn* and *The Cingalee* with faint praise?' and Brookfield replied, 'I—er—wasn't aware that I praised either of them at all.'

'Well now,' said Bankes, 'about the dramatic interest in the Plaintiff's piece——?'

'Interest?' said Brookfield, with a charming air of innocent surprise.

As he was leaving the box, Darling inquired: 'Have you left the stage, Mr. Brookfield?' 'I have, my lord.' 'Then,' replied Darling, 'it is a thousand pities.'

While George Edwardes was being examined in chief, Darling suddenly asked, 'Mr. Edwardes, do you say that there is no resemblance whatever between *The Cingalee* and the Plaintiff's play?' 'Certainly, my lord,' was the reply. 'Then,' said Darling, 'why don't you produce it as your next piece?' After which he sat back with a triumphant snap of his jaws.

'I am perfectly willing to do so, my lord,' said Edwardes, 'as soon as there is a comic part in it for Mr. Huntley Wright.'

One witness for the defence, a designer of stage costumes, had been called to prove that his designs for *The Cingalee* had not been taken from photographs by Captain Fraser. Bankes began his cross-examination with, 'You have a strong opinion about this case, have you not?'

'No,' said the witness. 'I don't know that I have.'

'Why, haven't you said that Captain Fraser had been shamefully ill treated by Mr. George Edwardes?'

'Certainly not,' replied the witness indignantly.

'Will you look at this letter?' And he was handed a letter in his own handwriting in which he had expressed a very unfavourable opinion of the defendant's conduct.

Gill rose to object that as he had been merely called to give evidence about the costumes he could not be cross-examined on any other point, but Darling ruled that as the question arose out of his answer in cross-examination it

could be asked. The unfortunate witness had to admit that he had written the sentences that were put to him and left the box with an uncomfortable feeling that he stood but a poor chance of ever again designing the costumes for a Gaiety piece.

The jury's sympathy was with the Plaintiff and so much so that they awarded him the sum of £3,000 as damages. Subsequently this sum was reduced by agreement between the parties to £1,000.

In 1903 Hawtrey toured the United States with *The Man from Blankley's*, but as it dealt with social conditions which were unintelligible to the average American audience, the play had only a moderate success, and that was due to his prestige.

It ran for thirteen weeks in New York, and did fairly well, I believe, in Washington and Boston, but so badly in other cities that it was soon replaced by *A Message from Mars*.

I never expected to hear any more of it, when, one afternoon early in March 1906, Charles Hawtrey came in to ask me if I could call at the Haymarket that evening and see Frederick Harrison. It seemed that *The Indecision of Mr. Kingsbury* was nearing the end of its run there, the negotiations for its successor had fallen through, and Harrison had nothing else in hand. So Hawtrey had suggested that, as there were several members of the original *Man from Blankley's* cast, including Fanny Brough, Henry Kemble, and Holman Clark, Harrison might do worse than revive my play—'The Soldiers haven't seen it yet,' was one of Charles's arguments, I remember.

Harrison, according to Charles, was 'a little touchy', and by no means sanguine as to a revival, also relations between him and my dramatic agent were a trifle strained. Altogether, I went to the Haymarket that evening without much hope that anything would come of the interview.



After I had waited for some little time in a pleasant softly lit room at the top of the theatre, where I read a good deal of a book about Henry Irving, Frederick Harrison appeared. He was tall and slender, with rather thin black hair, touched at the ears with white, fresh coloured clean-shaven face, mobile black eyebrows, and very dark eyes which he fixed on me as he talked, as though he had some idea of hypnotizing me. He was very courteous, dignified, and scholarly; before he went on the stage he had taken a high degree in the Classical Tripos, and then become a tutor; as an actor he had been competent, but had long given up acting for management. He was intensely and justly proud of the Haymarket.

He began by telling me the history of the negotiation which had been broken off; how my agent, acting for a certain distinguished dramatist, had demanded more and more exacting conditions at each interview, and Harrison gave a remarkably good imitation of the agent's portentous solemnity when he arrived one day and began: 'I am the bearer of news which I feel must come as a great blow to you. I am sorry. I deeply sympathize but—we have decided to withdraw.' And Harrison, who had been secretly longing himself to withdraw, had replied that it was a great blow—but he supposed there was no help for it. Then the agent had returned next day with the news that he thought he saw his way to a concession, to which Harrison said that he wanted no concessions—the matter, so far as he was concerned, was done with. 'Done with!' the other had said with a gasp. 'Certainly,' was Harrison's answer, 'what else did you expect? I thought you were trying to show me that you didn't consider the Haymarket the right place for the piece.'

All this, as of course I saw at the time, was intended to show me that Harrison would stand no nonsense, even when dealing with an established dramatist. Then he approached the subject of the revival; he confessed that he

had not Hawtrey's belief in it; *The Man from Blankley's* was a delicate plant to rear; it would mean a heavy salary list, and the production would cost him a thousand pounds at least. What were my views as to terms? I said I would prefer to hear his. 'Well,' he said, 'how would 2½ per cent. on all receipts up to eight hundred pounds, and 5 per cent. afterwards suit you?'

I knew that the terms I had got at the Prince of Wales's were very much better than these, and said I was afraid they would not suit me at all.

He said I must remember that a revived play was a less advantageous venture than a first production—to which my answer, naturally, was that on the contrary it should be a safer speculation, as it had already proved a success.

After which he proposed 5 per cent. on the first eight hundred pounds, and 8 per cent. afterwards. I said I must ask for time to consult my agent before I decided, and he assured me that he didn't want to rush me, so it was finally arranged that I should give him my decision by twelve o'clock the next day.

So we parted very cordially, not before Harrison had told me of a very striking play called *Nebuchadnezzar*, which he was considering and of which he had a very high opinion. I daresay he had, but he never produced it, and, after what Charles had told me, I did not consider it a very serious rival.

By eleven next morning I had a letter from my agent in answer to mine, containing the scale of percentages I might ask, viz. 5 per cent. on the gross receipts up to £1,200, 8 per cent. on the gross receipts up to £1,400, and 10 per cent. on them if they were over that sum.

Armed with this I saw Harrison and Horace Watson, who asked whether I meant the further percentages to be on the total gross receipts or only on the differences—for instance, was the 8 per cent. to be on the £1,400, or on £200, the excess over £1,200. To which I promptly

said—on the total gross receipts, and they as promptly replied that they could not afford it. Then Watson proposed a compromise: 5 per cent. up to £1,400 and 10 per cent. on the total gross receipts if they exceeded £1,400, which I said I would accept, and the matter was settled.

For some weeks, at all events, the gross receipts did exceed £1,400, and I received royalties on the 10 per cent scale.<sup>1</sup>

Except that it was performed from time to time by amateur societies *The Man from Blankley's* remained dormant until 1917, when it was given at a matinée at His Majesty's for the benefit of the Royal General Theatrical Fund, with Charles Hawtrey as Strathpeffer, supported by a magnificent cast including Miss Gladys Cooper, Miss Irene Vanbrugh, Miss Ellis Jeffreys, Miss Doris Lytton, and Mr. Nelson Keys.

*The Man* was revived again by Mr. J. T. Grein and Miss Nancy Price, with an 'all star' cast, at the People's Theatre in December 1930.

I was told that many who saw the play enjoyed it, but I regret to say that the management lost a good deal of money over their venture, as, with very low priced seats and a small theatre, could hardly be avoided.

And this time most of the critics had little to say in favour of the play; it 'dated badly' I was told, 'its bones creaked', it was a bad play, and the parts were ill written; it could now be given a rest, and no more would be heard of it, and so on.

Of course it does date, as, in its earliest form, it appeared in *Punch* just thirty-nine years ago. But its characters were quite recognizable types in those days, and, given the central idea, I think they talk and behave very much as people in that particular circle would do in actual life and in the nineties. As for the construction, I set out to represent a middle-class dinner-party of the period from

<sup>1</sup> The revival ran from 24 March 1906 to 10 January 1907.

beginning to end, and I don't know, even now, on what other lines I could have done it, while I am certainly entitled to claim that it does not follow the technique of the pre-Ibsen school of dramatists.

However, it does not lie with me to defend *The Man from Blankley's*, and if it has lost the power to entertain which it certainly once possessed, the sooner, so far as I am concerned, it is forgotten, the better.

In April 1906, *Salted Almonds*, a collection of my short stories, was published by Messrs. Smith & Elder and most favourably noticed; it went into a second impression, after which it was heard of no more. It contained what I still think was some of my best work in a lighter vein, but it had no particular success.

Later that summer I went down to Farnham for a week-end visit; on arriving at the station a porter put my suit-case in a car which I presumed was my host's and a girl who was sitting in it greeted me with: 'How do you do, Uncle John? I'm Pansy!' So I had to explain that I was not Uncle John, and if she was disappointed she concealed her feelings admirably.

During that visit I was told a little anecdote of the famous Mrs. Cornish, the wife of the then Vice-Provost of Eton. A rather shy boy had been asked to supper at the Lodge and she suddenly asked him: 'And were you on the river this afternoon, Mr. ——?' He said yes, he had been sculling. 'Really,' she said. 'Now tell me—how was the Castle looking? Romantic, or historic?' As a matter of fact he hadn't noticed, but he plunged with 'Oh—er—historic.' Whereupon, to his confusion, Mrs. Cornish called to her daughter at the other end of the table, 'Dorothy! Why weren't *we* on the river to-day? Mr. —— says the Castle was looking historic!'

On another occasion when a very small new boy had just arrived at Eton, Mrs. Cornish, after asking his

Christian name, remarked to his parents, 'You ought to have called him Susannah,' which, as was not unusual with her remarks, left them wondering helplessly what on earth she meant. But neither they nor any one else ever knew.

Once at a dinner-party she startled the man who had taken her down by beginning, 'Do you know, my first child was born to-day and I find it such a thrilling sensation!' However, before he could congratulate her on so speedy a recovery he learnt that it was merely her way of informing him that a book she had written had just been published.

In August 1906 I went on a cycling tour in Denmark and Sweden with Dr. M. R. James (now Provost of Eton and author of the most original and terrifying ghost stories in the English language), Edward Stone, and A. B. Ramsay, both of whom were then Eton masters; the last named is now the Master of Magdalene.

In Denmark we found that the local dogs, a large and fierce breed, had a peculiarly violent objection to cyclists, which they showed by pursuing us furiously for miles on most routes, fortunately without overtaking us. Probably they were not nearly so savage as they seemed; once when we were wheeling our bicycles through a village called Amboek Kro and I was last in the single file, an enormous Blue Dane came out and followed close at my heels, growling in a way that made me speculate uncomfortably on what would happen when I mounted my machine. But as soon as we passed the end house of the village he gave me a gentle nip in the seat of my knickerbockers and turned back, content with this delicate hint that in his opinion English tourists were better at home.

Near Viborg we came upon what appeared to be a serious accident; an elderly farmer was lying on the road bleeding profusely, and near him stood his horse and cart.

We stopped and moved him out of harm's way, when we found that there was not much the matter with him beyond being deplorably drunk. Presently another cart arrived containing two elderly farmers, who pulled up so sharply out of sympathy that they both fell out of their cart and proved to be, if possible, more drunk than the first. Their respective horses stood quietly looking on as if such incidents were an ordinary feature in the return from market day. And as the three farmers seemed perfectly satisfied with the conditions, we left them under the care of the horses.

At Goteborg that August I was shocked to see an announcement in a London paper of the sudden death of Mrs. Craigie (John Oliver Hobbes). I had met her first at the T. P. O'Connors soon after her first book *Some Emotions and a Moral* had made its appearance, and only three weeks before her death I had talked with her at an afternoon party at Mrs. William Allhusen's house in Kensington Palace Gardens, and thought her younger and more beautiful and brilliant than ever.

She was as witty in talk as in her writing, her subsequent books were at least not unworthy of her first, and two comedies by her, *The Bishop's Move* and *The Ambassador*, had successful runs at the Garrick and St. James's respectively.

Success, social and literary, had not spoilt or turned her head in the slightest. She was always charming and animated but quite simple and unaffected; had she lived she would undoubtedly have done even better work, for she had extraordinary insight and power of expression.

Whether her best books are still in print I do not know, but I do know that they do not deserve to be forgotten.

Fortune had been kind to her in many ways. She had wealthy parents, great personal beauty; she was exceptionally well educated, and her literary gifts obtained recognition at once. But it had denied her one thing, her

marriage had not proved a happy one, and I fear her life was always a little embittered by that experience.

From Hamburg I went on alone to Berlin and back by Magdeburg and the Hook, landing on the 16th of September at Harwich, where I found my bicycle and rode to Chelmsford. At luncheon in an hotel at Witham I sat near a party of three young motorists, one of whom was describing how he had been attacked by a rough—‘didn’t like the look of me, I suppose, and hit me in the jaw as I was passing and knocked me clean into the gutter.’

‘And what did *you* do?’ asked his friend.

‘Well,’ said the first young man, ‘I got up and looked at him. Saw he was a bruiser and only wanted some one to settle—and I walked on. I wasn’t taking any more.’

‘Ah,’ said the other, ‘“he that fights and runs away”, eh? Well, I’m not like that myself. If *I* get a blow, I *have* to hit back, if it was twenty men. Can’t help myself.’

‘Oh,’ said the first man, ‘I’m hot-blooded too—in a general way. Only there are some chances I don’t take on.’

But I fancy he was wishing he had been less communicative.

*The Man from Blankley’s* ran for the rest of the year, and one night in September Hawtrey asked me to join him and an American friend at the Haymarket after the play and go the round of thieves’ kitchens and doss houses in the East End. At the Three Nuns in Aldgate we met the detective who was to be our showman and who was not only far from sober but easily the most unprepossessing person we came across that night.

He showed us some of the places where ‘Jack the Ripper’s’ victims had been found. At one he took us under a low and grimy arch with a hideous little paved court at the back: in the archway there was a door with a

window beside it; at this door he knocked and after a considerable time it was opened by a haggard unshaven man whose face looked ghastly with fear in the light of the paraffin lamp he held. He evidently thought that he was wanted and was immensely relieved to find that it was merely to allow us to see his room, in which it seemed an unfortune of the name of Jane Kelly had been done to death.

We were told that the walls were still stained with her blood but we did not look—the room was dreadful enough in itself. It was appalling to think that any one could find such a refuge.

We saw several fourpenny lodging-houses, all of which seemed fairly clean and well-conducted. In one of them the matron pointed out a handsome fresh-coloured woman of about thirty with abundant brown hair and eyes that were half shy and half laughing, who was standing in the passage nursing a kitten. 'Look at that girl. I'll tell you about 'er outside.' And we were told that she had just come out of prison, to which she had been sentenced for seven years for stabbing a woman in twenty-five places.

Cats were numerous in these lodging-houses. 'See that one?' said the matron, 'his mistress was murdered seven year ago and 'e's bin 'ere ever since—he's a faithful ole beast, 'e is!'

Hawtrey and I found as we drove back together that we had both felt not a little ashamed of ourselves for intruding as we had on the occupants of these sordid cubicles. 'Good God!' said Charles, 'think of those poor devils sleeping in those ghastly places, while you and I——!'

At supper at his Club that night he told me how, when he was in America, he had come across a man who had been at Eton with him and in the Second Eleven, and was now an undertaker's assistant in New York at five dollars a week. 'I have to be there most of the time,' he said to



Hawtrey, 'because, you see, bodies are constantly coming in. It's not—ah—very pleasant work.'

On the 17th of December 1906 I went to see Tenniel again at Portsdown Road, when for the first time he told me that he feared his eyesight had begun to fail. 'But perhaps', he said, 'I imagine it's worse than it is.' He insisted on coming downstairs to the door with me, saying, when I protested, 'I'm not so feeble as all that!'

In the spring of 1907 I began again to contribute fairly regularly to *Punch*. I spent an evening at the Oxford Music Hall and brought away a few gems. One was a moral song by a very stout lady in a large white hat and feathers; I made a note of the refrain which was as follows:

*Be advised by your dear old Father,  
He knows more than you;  
When in doubt you seek his counsel,  
He'll know what to do.  
Be a real good lad. Tell your dear old Dad  
And he's sure to pull you through!*

Which was excellent advice but did not seem quite in keeping with the white hat and feathers.

Then there was a female impersonator in a Dan Lenoish make-up and a song sung to the air of 'The Campbells are Coming', which began thus:

*Wouldn't you like to be meedle-de-eedily, diddle-ty-diddle  
diddle-dy-um?  
All the toffs ask me to teadle-de-eedily! &c., &c.*

which I still consider almost as fine an example of audacity in rhyme as a song I heard at another music-hall by 'the Sisters Something or other', who announced that they

*Rowed down to Putney  
In jackets so buttony,  
We're London Serciety Gurls!*

Another item in the Oxford programme was 'Herr Grais's Baboons'. The chief baboon made his entrance in a top hat, pink evening coat, and black satin knee-breeches, a costume which he promptly discarded and revealed a suit of silver spangles in which he resembled one of the demons in a Temptation of St. Anthony. I thought he looked distinctly puzzled when, after he had laboriously executed a series of back somersaults, Herr Grais stepped forward and bowed modestly in acknowledgement of the applause. Till then the baboon had been under the impression that it was *he* who had performed the somersaults, but of course he might have been mistaken. There was an infant baboon who rode a bicycle, and a female relation, appallingly costumed as Gretchen with a flaxen wig and pigtails, who rushed on and carried him out with maternal solicitude at the conclusion of his performance.

There were many less amusing places in which to spend an evening than the Oxford or the Tivoli in those days; the humour, if not exactly refined, was genuine and rollicking enough and one could generally derive intense joy from the unconscious absurdity of the more serious 'turns'.

Now in the few palatial variety theatres that the cinema has left us there is nothing but elegance and refinement; the baboons may be still with us perhaps, but the inspired buffoon and the artless lady vocalist would find more sophisticated audiences nowadays.

In May 1907 I dined at the Kinsmen Club and sat next to Frederick Kerr, who told me that during the run of Sir Arthur Pinero's play, *The Hobby Horse*, in which Kerr played Pinching, he was told one evening that Pinero was in front and that Kerr would be wise to drop some lines he had introduced into his part. 'No,' said Kerr, 'I'll play straight. If he don't like 'em, they shall go out afterwards.' 'So I kept the lines in and all "Pin" said

afterwards was: "Dear old boy, I'd no idea there was so much in the part." "

That month I went down to Mayfield for three weeks, and having cycled over to Lewes one day to see some Firemen's Sports in the hope (which was not fulfilled) of getting material for a 'Voces' I heard a publican holding forth to a friend as follows:

'He came into my bar and ordered a whisky. I gave a look at 'im and said, "No, I refuse to serve you." 'E sez, "Why, you're *bound* to serve me." I sez, "That's not the Law." 'E sez, "You don't know the Law," and I told 'im I knew it better than what 'e did. Then some one ordered 'im a drink, and I 'ad to serve him. But I said no more. I didn't lose my temper. All I said to 'im was: "I look upon you as a *thing*, I do—not as a man. I've said all I 'ave to say to *you*." And 'e kep' sayin', "'Ere's good 'ealth to all—except *you*, landlord. I don't wish *you* good 'ealth", and chippin' me like that the ole evening. Nex' day I went to see — the Mayor and leadin' solicitor in Tunbridge Wells, who knows more about the licensing law nor any man in England. "Look 'ere, my dear boy," 'e told me, "the Law gives you absolute discretion to refuse to serve any man you like for no reason whatever. You may think 'e'll get up a political disturbance, or he may bring in a dawg with 'im which you think may bite, but you ain't bound to give no reasons. So nex' time you refuse to serve 'im and 'e swears at you, you summon 'im for abusive language." I paid 'im my six and eightpence willing enough. I knew that was the Law on'y I wasn't just sure of it. Now I *know*.'

On my return to London that June I was passing Albert Gate one afternoon when I saw that the traffic was partially blocked by the break-down of two of the recently introduced motor-buses. Presently a string of smart hansoms approached and I naturally expected that the

stranded pair of drivers and conductors would be enfiladed by a fire of withering sarcasm.

Each hansom cabman evidently felt that this was a heaven-sent opportunity if he could only do it justice, but almost every one as he came by seemed unable to think of anything scathing enough to be worthy of his reputation, and contented himself with a grin of diabolical glee.

One man did call out 'There's yer nice penny drive!' but, as he probably recognized later, with less point than he could have wished. Altogether it was a disappointing experience. It was the driver of a horse-bus and not a hansom cabman who on a similar occasion remarked to his rival, 'I'm always tellin' yer to tike it 'ome and now yer want to, yer can't!'

The 'Gentleman Joe' of the last century was generally credited with abundant wit, but I doubt if it was really as devastating as that of his humbler brethren the driver and conductor of the horse-drawn omnibus.

I find in my journal for June 1907 a note of an experience at the Derby told me by Walter Frith. A friend of his went down to Epsom on Derby Day with a well-known racing man. The friend was wearing a very valuable tie-pin which he found had vanished soon after he reached the course. The racing man undertook to interview a bookmaker he knew and see whether anything could be done about it. The bookmaker promised to do his best, and later on informed him that if the owner of the pin would be behind the Grand Stand while a certain race was being run he might recover his property.

He kept the appointment but saw no one who looked in the least like a suspicious character. Presently a very mild curate walked past him and as he did so murmured, 'Were you looking for a pin by any chance?' 'I am,' was the answer, whereupon the curate meekly inquired 'Which?' and turning back the lappel of his coat displayed

a double row of extremely handsome pins. 'That one, you damned thief!' said the other man indicating his own. 'Then allow me to restore it,' said the apparent curate and disappeared promptly to complete his collection.

On the 9th of July 1907, Mark Twain was entertained at dinner at 10 Bouverie Street by the Proprietors of *Punch*, and Burnand came up from Ramsgate for the occasion.

Just before we sat down, Philip Agnew's little daughter Joy, then about eight or nine years old, came out from the cupboard in which she had been hidden and recited very charmingly a little speech in welcome of Mark Twain, after which she presented him with Bernard Partridge's original *Punch* cartoon for that week, in which Mark Twain appeared. As she was about to slip away he stopped her and said, after kissing her, 'Don't go! You're the sweetest and prettiest thing here!' (which indeed she would have been in companies where the competition was far more formidable than any of us provided).

So at his and Rudy Lehmann's intercession she sat at the *Punch* table for the first two courses, which no one else of her sex has done before or since.

After dinner Sammy proposed the guest's health in a happy little speech explaining in a thoroughly Sammy-ish way that it had fallen on him to speak because the planet on which we live happened to have rolled a few more times round him than any of the other members.

In replying Mark Twain began with an allusion to Joy as 'that sweet child' and could not speak of her without visible emotion. Then he spoke of 'the satisfaction and conceit' he felt on being burdened with honours during his visit to London, and assured us elaborately that he was not responsible for the loss of the Ascot Gold Cup which had just been mysteriously stolen. He described how he had first met Burnand thirty-five years ago when

he himself was lecturing in Hanover Square and Burnand somewhere else. 'When we had nothing to do at nights we went to hear one another lecture. And here's Burnand still—very old. And here am I still—very old.' Then he told us about a secretary he had had, 'a peculiarly refined man; I used to have him in whenever I was feeling coarse. D—— was my other secretary, a very good fellow, but not refined; he used to get hold of —— and fill him up with indecent anecdotes.'

He said how deeply he was impressed by the London cabman's knowledge of London with its innumerable gardens, terraces, and squares. 'I never believed my cabman would find the place—but he always did—except', he added, to-night when his faith was shaken for the first time, when the man had failed to find Bouverie Street. 'I'd found it myself once before—when I wasn't looking for it.' He then ragged Lucy, 'You, gentlemen, with your High Art and your pure Literature, you might go wrong if you hadn't some one like Lucy around.' He confessed that he had failed to see the joke in a recent *Punch* drawing which represented a provincial couple at a railway booking-office asking the ticket-clerk for 'Two to Looe', to which he had replied 'Pip-pip'. 'But when it was explained to me that Looe was one of your country towns and Tootaloo and Pip-pip two of your national witticisms, I realized that I had not been so to speak on the same platform.'

Mark Twain's appearance was picturesque and distinguished. I suppose he must have been somewhere about seventy at this time, but though his abundant hair and long moustache were snow-white there was nothing else to indicate his age; he was slim and vigorous, with narrow piercing dark eyes under bushy eyebrows and with a strongly curved aquiline nose; like most of his





Signed menu card of the *Punch* dinner to Mark Twain, 9 July 1907



I had a short talk with him after dinner, during which he told me about his autobiography and of some very elaborate scheme he had devised for protecting the copyright after his death, though why such precautions were necessary I either forget or he did not explain.

About ten-thirty he rose and, saying that he was an old man and must go back to bed, took his leave of us.

After he had gone Owen Seaman made a short speech thanking Philip Agnew and Lawrence Bradbury for their hospitality and expressing our pleasure at seeing Burnand once more at the Table, and Burnand in reply said that some things had changed since he was last with us but one thing at least remained unaltered and that was the friendliness of his old colleagues.

And so ended an evening which was a unique event in the history of *Mr. Punch*, and was also the last occasion on which we saw Burnand's genial handsome face and heard his jolly laugh at the Table.

Mark Twain died on the 21st of April 1910.

A day or two after the Mark Twain dinner I went to see Tenniel again and found him, looking very well in a grey suit, retouching a water-colour drawing of Griselda allowing her child to be taken from her. I pressed him to send some of his water-colour drawings to one of the exhibitions, but he said: 'They don't care for my work except in connexion with *Punch*.' Besides, I'm tired. I can't take the trouble.' He had not been out of the house for months, chiefly, I gathered, owing to an objection to motor-cars. He begged me to be careful myself of them. (I am certainly careful enough now.)

I had for at least a year been trying to use the legendary mandrake as the subject for a short story, without finding any satisfactory way of treating it. But in this July of 1907 I saw that it could only be told with any effect in the first person and as a peculiarly vivid and uncomfortable nightmare. So I got a commission from Mr. Greenhough

Smith to do it for the Christmas number of *The Strand* and set to work on it in high spirits. It duly appeared there under the title of 'Ferdie'. Dear Sammy and two or three other friends found it entertaining, and when at the end of the year I was staying with his son-in-law and daughter I was presented with a particularly fearsome mandrake consisting of a carrot with protruding match-head eyes, a tinted almond nose, and twigs for arms, which took several years to shrink gradually to the size of a prawn. I still think that 'Ferdie' was one of my best short stories, but with the above exceptions I have never come upon any one who had read it. But I had enjoyed writing it, some at all events had enjoyed reading it, and as I received about a hundred guineas for it from *The Strand* I had no cause for complaint.

In the pit of a theatre one evening that summer there was a young engaged couple just behind me; the fiancée had a very bad cold and after blowing her nose violently she said to her companion, with an evident sense of the injustice of Providence, 'I don't know how it is—but you never have colds like *I* have!'

At the Oxford later I collected two typical examples of music-hall ditties sung by Dan Crawley. The first had an idiotic but catching refrain of

*Ty-ump, ty-ump, ty-iddley-ump. Ty-ump, ty-iddley-ay,*  
and one verse ran thus:

*'E fired 'is bullet on the range,  
The bullet went astray,  
And sbot the Sergeant-Major in  
'Is umpty-iddley-ay! (after which the refrain).*

The second was sung in the character of an elderly female exulting hysterically in the prospect of her approaching wedding—

*I'm a-goin' to be married on Sunday!*

(she informed us), and proceeded with a profusion of metaphor:

*As sure as I was born!  
There's another little bird a-goin' to be caged,  
Another lot o' meat a-goin' to the butcher's,  
Another bit o' pickled pork a-goin' to be tied up,  
Next Sunday morn!*

It was far from refined, but it was sung and danced with a delirious rapture that made it irresistibly funny.

In August 1907 I went for another cycling tour with Dr. M. R. James and A. B. Ramsay, this time through France. Most of our route, little as we knew it then, lay along the fronts of the opposing armies in the Great War.

Military manoeuvres were going on all round us that August; now and then we came upon a regiment of Cuirassiers being billeted in a village or a train of cavalry *fourgons* rattling through a wood. Verdun was full of officers in every variety of uniform who looked, it struck me, as if they took their profession much more seriously than did their predecessors in 1870. Most of them had the grave and scientific aspect one associated more with German staff-officers.

I have nothing more to record of that tour, which was as lacking in incident as most other pleasant tours of the kind, except that in the *salle-à-manger* of the Hôtel du Commerce at Roye we found two coloured prints with inscriptions in English. One represented a group at table endeavouring to make some impression on a very tough goose; the title of this was 'To hard'; the other showed the same group holding their noses in the presence of a lobster, and under this print was the legend 'To ripe'.

There was a sort of artlessness in this anglicization which somehow appealed to us. Eight or nine years later those prints must have ceased to appeal to any one, being

probably buried under the debris which was all that the war left of the Roye we knew.

And I must not forget Ramsay's story of the English tourists, one of whom, after they had wandered for hours without nearing their objective, said to the other, 'D'you know, old man, I don't believe "tout droit" does mean "first turning to the right" after all!'

In the Münster-platz at Basle we saw a funeral procession in which the hearse was followed by a double row of mourners all chatting and smiling more cheerily than ordinary wedding-guests. Possibly the deceased had deprecated all excessive grief; if so, he would have been gratified could he have seen how loyally his wishes were being respected, or he might not have been.

At Basle Ramsay had to leave us, but the Provost and I went on along the Rhine to Constance, partly cycling, partly by rail.

In Säckingen Cathedral (if it is a cathedral, which I forget) we saw a statue of St. Fridolin with Count Hugo, whom he miraculously restored from death to the bosom of his family. Unfortunately the saint seems to have resuscitated him as a living skeleton, so that his intervention might have been more tactful. But very likely Count Hugo's family were glad to have him back in any shape and soon got used to his appearance. Still, I think the general opinion must have been that if you must perform miracles it is just as well to do the thing thoroughly.

We passed through Laufenburg, where I had written some part of *The Giant's Robe* in 1883, and found it unchanged; in the tobacconist's window there still sat the big wooden negro in the pearl necklace, the falls still foamed through the arches of the quaint old bridge that Turner etched, the big salmon-nets were still suspended from poles on the rocks below it. Nothing had altered. In 1923 I went to Laufenburg once more and hardly anything was the same.

From Constance we went to Lindau with its twin piers, one ending in a lighthouse, the other in a huge seated stone lion, and its gabled and frescoed old houses; and on another day to St. Gallen, where the Provost examined eighth- and ninth-century Irish manuscripts in the Stifts-Bibliothek while I explored the antiquity shops, one at least of which had some interesting Swiss glass. And then our tour ended and we returned direct to London via Basle and Calais.

The case in which it was claimed that the late Mr. Druce of Tottenham Court Road was in reality the Duke of Portland was in the Law Courts that November, and a female witness had declared that she was a friend of Charles Dickens and that he had informed her that the Duke was Druce.

I had been staying for a week-end at Foxwold and on the Monday was returning to London with Miss Georgina Hogarth, my fellow guest. At Dunton Green Junction a certain local magnate whom we both knew bustled up to her importantly and asked, 'Well, Miss Hogarth, what about this Druce case, eh? Think your friend Charles Dickens knew anything of it?'

Miss Hogarth was not at all given to bristling, but she bristled on that occasion. 'He was my brother-in-law,' she said with immense dignity, 'and these people's stories are all lies.'

And not long afterwards they were proved to be so and the false witnesses were sentenced to terms of imprisonment. Before the action, however, not only was there a large section of the Public who thought there was 'something in' their preposterous story, but a good many of them had backed their opinion by investing in bonds to be repaid in the event of a successful issue.

It was necessary to disinter the body of Mr. Druce before they could be convinced that he was nobody but himself.

Probably in those days there was a certain piquancy in the idea of a duke who was secretly a prosperous furniture dealer and who had constructed an elaborate underground passage from his ducal premises to his shops.

On the 17th of November 1907 I find a note of the death of H. W. Kemble at Jersey. He was the best actor of elderly comedy characters in his time; his figure was broad and of middle height with a broad massive and solemn face which became indescribably comic on the stage; his voice was rich and deep.

No actor could be more conscientious or loyal to his author than Harry Kemble; he never altered a word or introduced a gag in his lines and was much displeased on the author's account when others took such liberties.

He was the Gilwattle in *The Man from Blankley's* both in 1901 and 1906 and his splendid rendering of the part helped enormously towards the success of that play. He told me once of a visit he had paid as a young man to his aunt, Fanny Kemble, the tragic actress, when, to his question whether she had ever seen him act, she replied crushingly, 'I have seen you grin through a horse-collar, Harry!' But as a matter of fact Kemble was always an artist as a comedian.

At the Beefsteak Club he was a much loved member and always addressed as 'Beetle'.

At luncheon one day in December I met Miss Lena Ashwell (now Lady Simson), who told us a Scottish experience of hers. She was at Glasgow on tour and going out to post a letter had asked a native where she could find a post office. 'Ye'll go down theer,' said the man, 'and tak the third turning to the left and then ye'll keep on till the second turning on the right and——' 'But my good man,' said Miss Ashwell, 'there must be one nearer than that.' 'Aye,' he said, 'there's one jest facing ye.'

In some American town, she added, a stranger had stopped an inhabitant and inquired, 'Do you know where the post office is?' To which the inhabitant simply answered, 'Yes,' and passed on. Then repenting his rudeness he turned and overtook the stranger and asked, 'Did you want to find the post office?' And the stranger said, 'No,' and walked on in his turn.

I met a man at dinner who rather prided himself on his plain speaking; he told us that being at 'The Cheshire Cheese' one day he demolished the legend that Dr. Johnson had been one of its frequenters and showed that the story had originated within his own recollection. Whereupon one of a party of American visitors at the next table had remarked, 'I reckon, sir, it would be money in the pocket of the proprietor of this restaurant to provide you with a daily meal at some other establishment.'

Towards the end of 1907 I saw Tenniel again; his sister, Miss Tenniel, a handsome and stately old lady, had had a fall and injured her hip; he told me that his eyesight had grown too bad for writing or reading now, but he looked well and was as cheery as ever. E. T. Reed had just done a drawing for *Punch* on the recent rival illustrators to *Alice*, and Tenniel gave me a cordial message to him.

On New Year's day 1908, during a shoot at Nymans in Sussex, I was walking with Sammy, who was one of the guns, when I noticed that he no longer had his usual tireless energy but was tired and out of breath in going up the slightest slope; this was the first indication of the disease which was to carry him off in 1910.

I find from my journal that, on the 14th of February, I went to see Tenniel and found him writing a letter, so that his eyesight must have improved just then. The fact that at the Banquet in his honour on his retirement from *Punch* he had broken down in his speech was always a

painful memory to him, and on this visit he said, 'Willie Mathews (Sir Charles Mathews the brilliant advocate) was so kind to me at that horrible dinner.' I repeated what Mr. Choate and other speakers had said that evening, viz. that no eloquence could have been more effective than his few sentences. But I think that if there was any incident in his life that he would gladly have forgotten, it was that Banquet.

At Easter I spent ten days very pleasantly at Banchory, where Sambourne's son-in-law, Col. L. C. R. Messel, had taken a fishing on the Dee. Sambourne himself was one of the house party, and as cheery as ever, but he did not fish nor take any active exercise.

A gillie told me a story I liked of a certain 'Jeanie' who remarked, 'I like being marret fine but I juist hate Jock—there's aye a something!'

I saw Tenniel on August the 6th, when he told me that Leech never liked Frith's 'Derby Day', which struck me as curious in a contemporary. I have heard exponents of the latest Art theories treat this picture as beneath contempt, but unless they regard Hogarth's work with similar disdain I have never understood their point of view. In conception, composition, observation, invention, and technical skill, it seems to me that, in its own particular genre, 'The Derby Day' is obviously a masterpiece and I suspect that its great fault in these critics' eyes is that it belongs to the Victorian age.

Tenniel's eyesight was not quite gone when I saw him that August, but he had definitely given up working.

In 1908 I dramatized a dialogue story of mine, *The Game of Adverbs*, as a one-act comedy. It was produced, I think, at the Garrick Theatre in March of that year, and afterwards taken on tour as a first piece to a play by Sir Max Pemberton, but nothing more came of it, as any demand for 'curtain raisers' has long ceased.



In that year I did little else but contribute to *Punch*, and write by request a story, 'Winnie', for the Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital describing the experiences there of a typical patient. It gave me more trouble and anxiety than any story I ever wrote, as of course it was essential that every detail should be absolutely correct. I spent most of the summer over it and it was eventually published by the late Sir John Murray in a book with the title *In a Good Cause*.

I wish I could think that it was of the slightest service to the Hospital, but I never heard of any copies of the book being sold.

It was a carefully and quite sincerely written little story, but being obviously written for a charitable purpose, it was not very likely to attract the general reader.

I was sitting in Kew Gardens one afternoon that summer on a seat facing the Pagoda when a boy of about twelve with a round freckled face, short nose, and large white teeth sat down by me and entered into conversation as follows:

'About how high should you think the Pagoda is? As high as the Flip-Flap? Higher than Chiswick Waterworks? . . . It's my holidays now. They began two days ago. I'm at Burlington School. On the hill, you know. But I'm going to Elstow School—boarding—next term. I shan't mind—I've been at three boarding-schools already—the first was beastly. I got tossed three times in a blanket the first night, only because I was a new boy. I got on quite all right afterwards, though. I was ten then, and what I minded was going at such short notice. My mother didn't like to tell me till just two days before. You know what mothers *are*. At my first school I couldn't think why all the fellows went about poking their hands into cracks and holes till one of the masters told me that in 1879 a chap had found an old bag with a lot of money in it. Did you know that the Roman soldiers used to hide

their money before they went to War? . . . Bother these flies! . . . I did laugh the other day—a big blue-bottle kept buzzing about my nose and I caught him and my father said, "Let the poor thing go, can't you?" So I did and by and by it went to him and I watched it buzz about him over my book and by and by he struck out at it and then he got in a rat and stood up and caught it and I said, "Let the poor thing go, Father!" Then he began to laugh and said, "Cases alter circumstances". No, I mean, "Circumstances alter cases". I love making things. When I was a kid of six (I don't remember this myself—my mother told me) I used to take my toy engines to pieces and try and put them together again. I remember doing it when I was nine. I put each piece in a separate piece of paper numbered and wrote the number and what it was on another piece. . . . Do you know how those wooden ships in a bottle are done? I did one once—it's quite easy. I've got seven weeks' holidays. We're going to Margate, I think. Or else Hastings. We *were* going motoring in Scotland in three big cars. I should have been in a Napier—a three-cylinder one. Now we're going at Christmas instead. . . . Where do you live? . . . Near Oxford Street? Oh, then you're quite in the thick of things, aren't you? Do you know Mandeville the inventor of the submarine? I do—at least my mother does. . . . I say, can you tell me the time? . . . Oh, then I ought to be off. Good-bye.'

He was a bright, intelligent, and friendly youth, and unless, which is only too likely, his career ended in the Great War, it would not surprise me to hear that he is doing well in whatever may be his line—probably engineering.

I was in lodgings on the hill above Streatley during August, September, and part of October, out all day on my bicycle or sculling on the river. The only work I did was a short serial for *Punch* in five instalments based on

Mr. Tickner Edwardes's admirable book *The Lore of the Honey-bee*; my hero was a drone whom I called 'Percy', with the result, Mr. Edwardes told me, that all his friends addressed him by that name.

I don't know that these articles produced any other effect, but this did not deter me from sending occasional contributions to *Punch*, which I continued to do, though less and less frequently, until 1930. I enjoyed writing them, and though Heaven knows I have had time enough to grow indifferent to seeing my work in print, I still cannot receive a proof without a distinct thrill.

A conversation of which I made a note I heard in the bar of the George Hotel at Wallingford. A stoutish hearty young man was talking to the elderly barmaid; it appeared that both were natives of Goring and that she was the daughter of the landlord of the Barleycorn Inn there. 'Ah,' said the young man, 'I wish 'twas those old times over again. I like to come across old Parish'ners. I was over in Goring the other day and looked in at the Barleycorn. There was ten standing about in the tap-room there. I asked 'em if they'd 'ave a drink and they all did.'

'I've known times', said the barmaid, 'when we did as much as five barrel a week there. My father, I never 'eard him say a bad word and 'e didn't like it in the tap-room either. 'E never lost by it.'

'There'll be some money comin' in to *you* one o' these days,' said the young man.

'Oh, I don't know,' she said, 'and poor father ill as he was for eight years.'

'Your mother'll go some time,' he said brightly. 'We've all of us got to go. Ain't we?'

'Mother keeps her 'elth wonderful well,' was her reply.

'A good many of the old Goring folk 'ave gorn lately,' he remarked. 'Isn't it a funny thing they all went off

within a year. There was——' [here he gave a long list of departed worthies, each of them according to him 'one o' the best'] 'and Mrs. Goffin, dear old soul she was!'

'Oh, she *was*!' cried the barmaid. 'She's cried with me by the hour. A perfect lady *she* was! If ever I saw a woman *murdered*!——'

'She *was* murdered,' the young man agreed solemnly.

'I got a birthday book now she gave me!' said the waitress, and added, rather irrelevantly, 'A wicked thing when you think of it! And her droring-room—*wasn't* it magnificent! Old silver candlesticks and everything! She wouldn't let me see 'er! "Oh, no, 'Arriet," she says, "you can't see her!" Why, there was things shifted from that place—for that woman's [obviously not the late Mrs. Goffin's] brother. 'E never lived to enjoy it! And the *things* she 'ad packed up—linen and that—nobody knows! We never *sball* know! But that woman'll never live 'appy after it!'

Which, as the young man left about then, was all I was ever to know of the end of the dear but lachrymose old soul whose actual surname, I need hardly say, was not Goffin. But this somewhat cryptic account of her passing is given exactly as I heard it.

### XIII

1908-1913

**I**N the autumn of 1908 Messrs. Dent & Co. took over *The Travelling Companions* from Messrs. Longmans and reissued it in a pocket edition for which I wrote a preface, but I heard from Messrs. Dent in the following April that there was no demand for the book, which has long been out of print.

A genial elderly barrister I met while staying with the Blackall-Simonds that October described the methods of two British workmen who were supposed to be doing some repairs in his chambers. The first man would turn up late and say, 'Ullo! Where's my mate? Never on time, 'e ain't! I know where 'e'll be found—in the Sol's Arms for a dead cert. I'll go and get 'im out of that.' Whereupon he would disappear, and after a long interval the other man would appear and ask, 'Seen anything o' my mate? What? bin 'ere and gorn away agin? Too bad, that is. Carn't do nothing without 'im! I expect 'e'll be at the Risin' Sun—that's where 'e'll be. I better go and fetch 'im.' Another interval; reappearance of first man with expressions of shocked disapproval, followed by a second departure in search of his erring comrade; and so on for the rest of the morning.

Which reminds me of another British workman who, after describing a little difference between him and his foreman, demanded with very natural indignation: 'Did 'e think as I was goin' to negleck my Beer for 'is *blanky* work?'

After returning to London I worked chiefly at a one-act comedy based on 'A Girl of Genius', a serial story in dialogue I had written for *Punch*. Probably the idea was not suited to the Stage, for the comedy was never performed.

In January 1909 I passed St. George's Terrace, Gloucester Road, and saw that No. 7, the house where my early years were passed, was half demolished and the rest of the terrace in the hands of the housebreakers.

The 28th of February was Tenniel's eighty-ninth birthday, but on calling at FitzGeorge Avenue, Hammersmith, to which he had moved from Portsdown Road, I was told that he was seriously ill and could see nobody. For a time it did not seem likely that he would recover, but his wonderful constitution triumphed eventually and he regained his usual health.

During the revival of *The Man from Blankley's* at the Haymarket, I had spoken both to Hawtrey and Harrison of my dramatized version of *The Brass Bottle*. I read a synopsis of it to Harrison in his Mount Street flat, and he had seemed to think well of it, saying that it was 'bold' and he 'liked boldness'.

I also read the entire play to Hawtrey, but though he was convulsed by the third act, he evidently did not think the piece had much chance of success. He objected to its being in four acts and said that no fantastic piece had ever succeeded that was in more than three. Whereupon I offered to make the first two acts into one, with an act drop to indicate the passing of an hour. But he did not approve of that and shortly afterwards Harrison returned the script.

After this second rejection I came to the conclusion that, as a play, *The Brass Bottle* was hopeless, and returned to my ordinary work.

But a year or so later, having nothing in particular to do just then, I decided to re-write the play once more in a somewhat shorter form, for its length was undoubtedly against it. Re-writing it interested and amused me, but I had no expectations of any better results, although my then agent, Mr. Arthur Hardy, had a strong belief in it.

If I remember rightly it was submitted to more than one actor-manager and declined on various grounds.

Hardy at length succeeded in inspiring a manager with faith in *The Brass Bottle*, viz. Mr. Gaston Mayer, who I think had had no previous experience in management except bringing over companies from Parisian theatres for a season of French plays. He was not the lessee of any theatre at this time, however, and altogether the prospect of my play being produced seemed to me distinctly nebulous.

For several months nothing much was done, but in November 1908 Hardy motored me down to lunch with Mayer at his hotel at Crowborough. I found him pleasant and, Frenchman as he was by birth, speaking English without the slightest accent; we discussed the cast and certain cuts here and there, which I agreed with him were required, also one or two points on which I remained of my own opinion. I left him, feeling for the first time that a production was really in sight.

In the spring of 1909 matters were still undecided, but I was not inclined to be anxious or impatient, as I had become absorbed in another enterprise, a three-act dramatic version of *Vice Versâ*. As I have previously mentioned, I had parted years ago with the dramatic rights in that book to Edward Rose, but he had lately died and I had bought them back from his trustees for £100.

I offered my version to the late James Welch, an inimitable comedian who would have been immensely funny as Mr. Bultitude in Dick's form and who was small enough to look like a boy. He and his partner came to see me after reading the script and I found they both took an unfavourable view of it. The partner's objection was that throughout the play the star was scored off instead of scoring, which always meant a failure, and Welch explained that he was a 'positive', not a 'negative' comedian. So that opening was closed.

But a few days later, at the beginning of April, *The Brass Bottle* advanced another step towards production, as it was read on the stage of the New Theatre by a distinguished company, including Mrs. Holmes Gore, Miss Rosalie Toller, Mr. Rudge Harding, Mr. Arthur Whitby, Mr. Leon Quartermaine, and Mr. A. E. George.

Although all were of course in ordinary dress and there was no scenery, Mayer and his syndicate were on the whole encouraged by the result. There was some talk of having another reading of the play to which Harrison, Hawtrey, Curzon, and Tom Davis should be invited, but it fell through.

One thing that came of the experiment was an invitation from Arthur Collins to call on him at Drury Lane. His brother Frank had assisted in the reading, and it seemed that he and A. E. George had spoken so enthusiastically of it that Arthur Collins had borrowed the script and been much amused. In consequence, though he thought the play 'risky', he had come into the syndicate. He told me he had met Charles Hawtrey at Kempton and spoken to him about *The Brass Bottle*. But the reason why he had wished to see me, he explained, was that he thought from the script that I could probably suggest some new and funny ideas for his next pantomime, which was to be *Aladdin*.

I did not see my way to this at the time, but, as I shall describe, eight years later I collaborated in a Drury Lane pantomime, and the subject was again *Aladdin*.

The months from that April to July passed in constant revisions of both *The Brass Bottle* and *Vice Versâ*, in negotiations for various theatres, and endless discussions of the cast for the former play.

I spent most of those months in rooms at a delightful farm-house near Mayfield in Sussex, expecting to hear at any moment that Mayer had been obliged to give up all idea of producing *The Brass Bottle*, and employing some



of my working hours on a scenario for a dramatization of Mr. Storer Clouston's novel *A County Family*.

I did not write to him on the subject, however, until I had planned out every scene of each act, and in reply he told me that, as I had inferred from internal evidence, his novel had begun as a comedy, and had recently been dramatized by himself. So that I had to abandon a project I should certainly have enjoyed.

Mr. Storer Clouston's version was eventually produced, but I think with only moderate success.

When I returned to London in the early part of July I found that the production of *The Brass Bottle* was no longer in doubt; Mayer had secured the Vaudeville, which, though its stage was small for scenic effects, was infinitely better for our purposes than the Royalty, the only possible alternative just then.

I had a rather discouraging afternoon on the stage of the Vaudeville, discussing with Mr. Hann, the scenic artist, and the stage carpenter how soon the change from a sitting-room to an Arabian hall could be effected. Neither of them thought at that time that it was possible in less than several minutes, which would have been fatal (it was actually done on the first night in eleven seconds!) and I could see that both were anything but sanguine as to the play's prospects.

The rest of that month was spent in settling the cast. I had written the important part of 'Fakrash' with the late Holman Clark in my mind, but when I had read him the play a year or so before, he told me frankly that he did not think it would have a chance of success. Consequently I thought it useless to suggest him for the part, and made no objection when I heard that a certain brilliant character comedian had been chosen to play it.

And on Monday the 9th of August rehearsals began, and for the first few days they could hardly have gone worse. For Gaston Mayer acted as his own producer,

and, being without experience in that very delicate art, soon managed, though without any loss of temper or courtesy, to fray the nerves of most of the company, by pulling them up unnecessarily before they knew their words.

The 'Fakrash' evidently did not care for his part, and seemed likely to make nothing of it but long drawn-out solemnity, while he was openly resentful of any suggestions.

By the end of that first week everything was at sixes and sevens, and I hourly expected to hear that the principal members of the company had thrown up their parts. Hardy and I both saw that we could only save the play by urging Mayer to ask Frederick Kerr to produce it, and we wrote him a letter to that effect.

It was by no means a pleasant letter to write, for Mayer strongly believed in the play and was doing his best for it, besides risking his money. Still, it had to be written, even if the result was that he abandoned the venture altogether.

I had told him that I could not attend rehearsals in the present conditions, and on the Saturday morning of that week Mayer came to see me. He was deeply hurt, as I had feared he would be, but I soon managed to make him see that I was none the less grateful for his enthusiasm for the play, and our talk from first to last was quite friendly. He told me that he had decided to give way on the question of a skilled producer, but—and this came as an unpleasant shock—that Kerr had taken the script home to read and reported that it was not his kind of play, was too long, and altogether that he could not undertake to produce it. However, Mayer had persuaded him to come to the theatre on Monday and hear the play run through before he came to a final decision.

There was no producer, except Charles Hawtrey, who was abroad, with anything approaching Kerr's

skill and authority, and if he failed us we had little to hope for.

I think if I had heard just then that the whole thing was off I should have been rather relieved than otherwise. I employed the intervening Sunday in walking from Golder's Green through Mill Hill to Elstree, and found myself gradually beginning to hope that, improbable as it seemed, the next day might bring an improvement in our fortunes.

And on Monday the 16th of August Kerr was sitting on the bridge with Louis Mercanton, the stage manager, while the first three of the four acts were gone through. I knew Kerr slightly, having met him once or twice at the country-house of friends of ours; as an actor I had seen and admired him ever since his appearance as a young American in Pinero's *Sweet Lavender*. No one on the stage had a lighter touch or could be counted upon more surely to appreciate the humorous possibilities of any part he played. And at the date, more than twenty years later, at which I write these lines, his appearance in the cast of a play or film is enough to ensure distinction or success to either.

So that I was extremely anxious that he should come to our rescue, though I had a strong impression that he was too accustomed to realistic comedy to find much that appealed to him in wildly fantastic farce. As I sat with Mayer in the stalls I could only see Kerr's back, and it told me nothing; he made no comment throughout the three acts, and when, shortly after one o'clock, he left to lunch with Mayer, he had committed himself to no opinion. I thought I could guess what it would be when he did.

But when we met on the stage an hour later, I found, to my intense relief, that he had decided to produce *The Brass Bottle*. The first act and part of the second were gone through again, and the effect of his presence on the company was immediate and electrical. He was not urbane

like Charles Hawtrey, but genial and good-humoured enough in a masterful way, and it was inspiring to feel that henceforth things would proceed with order and system.

My satisfaction was considerably dashed, however, in a talk I had with Kerr after that rehearsal, when he urged me strongly to end my second act with the departure of the Futvoyes instead of continuing it with the return of Fakrash, his undertaking to call on the Professor, and the re-transformation of the Arabian hall to Ventimore's sitting-room. I agreed that his suggestion would provide an effective curtain, but pointed out that it would make the opening of the third act unaccounted for. Nothing would have induced me to give way on this point, but I had to argue it repeatedly, both with him and Mayer, during the weeks that followed, and on each occasion I thought I had convinced them that I was right, and found on the next that it had all to be done over again. But these arguments were quite good-humoured on both sides, and I got my way at last.

On the day after Kerr took charge the actor who was to have played Fakrash resigned the part, and by great good fortune Holman Clark was free to take his place. He had not spoken ten lines of his part before Kerr and every one else concerned realized that he was the ideal man for it.

And, a few days afterwards, I was delighted to hear from him that he had changed his mind about the play and now believed it would be a success.

Kerr himself became hopeful, and we could not have wished for a more careful and conscientious producer, while in Louis Mercanton we had a stage-manager of genius, full of ideas and resource, and the stage-hands, from being dubious, all grew enthusiastic.

Notwithstanding, those five weeks of rehearsing were anxious and trying for all; a good rehearsal would leave

us in high hopes—then the next would drag and our spirits would sink to zero.

Labhart, who made the animals for the pantomimes, was modelling a realistic one-eyed mule with movable ears, eye, and mouth for the third act, and the scene had gone so well at rehearsals without this animal that I expected even better results when it arrived. And when it did, I was bitterly disappointed to find that somehow it wasn't funny at all. It struck me that this might be because its neck was stiff instead of being flexible, and I asked Labhart whether it would not be possible to fit it with cane. He agreed to try this, and the mule became such a joy to behold that Kerr had to warn those who appeared in that scene to be careful to preserve their gravity on the first night.

Nevil Maskelyne, as an act of friendship to Mayer, contrived for us the trick by which Fakrash finally retired into his bottle. This trick, which required the carefully timed co-operation of stage-hands behind and below the stage, was so extraordinarily effective that on the first night it gained tremendous applause.

The fateful first night drew nearer and nearer; I spent a good many of my evenings in going over the script and shortening the acts by cutting out every line that did not seem absolutely essential. For rehearsals had proved conclusively that the play was certainly too long, and if the ship was to be saved, all lumber must be ruthlessly thrown overboard. Somehow I did not find the process at all disagreeable, perhaps because I had reached a point at which none of my lines seemed to me to have any particular value. And at last I thought I had reduced the play to the right limits.

But I was premature in this: after a rehearsal with scenery, lights, and effects, just a week before the first night—fixed for Thursday the 16th of September—I heard Kerr say to some one that there was far too much

talk in the piece, and he wished *he* had the cutting of it. I felt sure that his judgement could be trusted, and it would have been ridiculous to be touchy when he was obviously only concerned for the success of the play. So I told him that I would go over the script once more that night, make drastic cuts, and meet him at the Vaudeville at eleven the next morning, when we could go through them together.

This was done, and Kerr surprised and gratified me by declaring that some of the lines I had cut were too good to lose, and generally expressing more hopefulness than he had shown hitherto.

But Mayer was in a depressed frame of mind, remarking, though half humorously, 'It won't be any cuts that will save the damned thing!'

Then the company were given the alterations in their parts, which had been duly entered in the prompt book. One would have thought that after getting word-perfect in a part nothing could be more upsetting than to be called upon to leave out lines here and there, but all the cast adapted themselves to the changes with perfect ease, evidently recognizing that they were improvements.

And it was cheering to know that most of the company believed the play would be a success, and even the stagehands, who are not apt to be optimistic, were keen and interested.

I thought myself, as did Mayer and Mercanton, that our fate would entirely depend upon how smoothly the play went on its first night, and how far the audience would be in a mood to accept the frankly impossible.

On the Sunday before the 16th I went down alone to Hampton Court, and, sitting at lunch in the glazed gallery of the hotel there, had succeeded in forgetting my cares in watching the crowd of charabancs, motor-buses, and cyclists streaming up the Long Walk, when suddenly a tram-car rolled past, and on its side the words *The*

*Brass Bottle*, in bold red lettering, gave me an unpleasant shock.

For somehow by suggesting the inevitable it had revived all my doubts, and I wondered uncomfortably how such advertisements would affect me by that day week. But it was a lovely afternoon, and in wandering through the Palace and grounds I again forgot to take thought for the morrow.

The next two days' rehearsals were far from encouraging. On the first, Miss Viva Birkett, afterwards Mrs. Philip Merivale, who, as Sylvia Futvoye, was all that I could have wished, slipped on some steps leading to the stalls, and for a time it seemed that she was too badly hurt to appear at all.

Then the transformation to the Arabian hall went wrong, and the lighting of several scenes was ineffective. I had to cope with more suggestions for altering the construction, which, however, were negatived. Altogether I was not surprised, on being introduced to one of the Gattis, the owners of the Vaudeville, that he carefully avoided all reference to the play.

On Tuesday came the dress rehearsal, which began about a quarter past two and was over by five o'clock, and went smoothly enough, though the lighting was still unsatisfactory in places. There were several people in the dress circle, but very little laughter. This I knew was the case at all dress rehearsals, but I left feeling very tired and depressed notwithstanding.

The day after saw our final rehearsal, which was quite satisfactory. I was cheered to hear from Kerr that he thought the dress rehearsal had gone well, and the company were all most cordial and enthusiastic, while Mayer showed himself a thorough sportsman by assuring me that, whatever the fate of the play, nothing would alter his high opinion of it.

So I left the Vaudeville that afternoon somewhat

relieved, and inclined to think that, with any luck, we might escape downright disaster.

I got to my box on Thursday night before the curtain rose; Hardy and three friends of his and mine were there already. So far as I can recollect, I felt nothing but a not unpleasant excitement; at least the long strain was over, and before two and a half hours I should know whether it had all been for nothing or not.

The play began; for the first three minutes or so the audience listened in silence, then a line of Alfred Bishop's got the first laugh. Later came Rudge Harding's entrance, and his inimitable rendering of a self-satisfied prig made every speech of his tell. Lawrence Grossmith's breezy boyishness won him the house's sympathy at once, and Holman Clark, as Fakrash, was taken to its heart from the moment he appeared. The change to the Arabian hall was, as I have said, owing to admirable stage management and the keenness and smartness of the stage-hands, accomplished in eleven seconds, and, preceded by the soft glow of three immense lanterns in the roof, had a remarkably striking and beautiful effect.

From that moment I felt that the worst was over—the audience was taking the story in the right spirit. And, indeed, after that the play went better and better with every scene; all the tricks went well, even the very dangerous Mule episode was approved of; the whole company played magnificently, without once halting or forgetting a word, and the curtain went down on the third act to roars of applause.

But as I went through the lobby to go on the stage for the last act I met a friend who said benevolently, 'Charming—charming! But wants cutting!' Which, as I had been hoping I had done with the blue pencil, was rather a damper. But my friend was right—I had more cuts to make the next day.

I stood at the wings during the fourth act; Holman's



return to the bottle caused a real sensation, as well it might, for the illusion was perfect; the final scene in the Pinafore room at the Savoy, which might have struck the audience as an anticlimax, was extraordinarily well received, thanks to the skill of Rudge Harding, Lawrence Grossmith, and Alfred Bishop.

At the end there were calls for all the company (Holman, as he richly deserved, being received with uproarious cheers), and I myself had to take my call as author. There was no doubt that the first night, at all events, had gone off triumphantly, and after thanking everybody concerned in the production, I could go to sup at the Savoy with no fear of either condolences or perfunctory compliments.

Still the play was not out of the wood until the critics delivered their verdict.

For once, it was unanimously in favour; luckily for me, there had been two or three first nights of gloomy and depressing plays just before, so that mine was greeted as a welcome contrast.

I had certainly never had so complete and unexpected a success since the days when *Vice Versâ* appeared, and, as then, I was unutterably relieved and thankful. I knew very well that with a less brilliant and devoted company, stage-hands who were indifferent instead of competent and enthusiastic, and a producer without Kerr's masterly skill and experience, the play must have been a dismal failure.

But it had had all these advantages, and now some were predicting that it was certain to run for a year, while the booking already promised full houses for some weeks ahead.

It was a remarkably pleasant time, in spite of the fact that on the second day after the production I was laid up till the end of the month, for the five weeks of rehearsals had been a greater strain than I knew at the time, and

affected my heart. But the trouble was functional, not organic, and I was not too ill to enjoy my success.

I had quite recovered by the 30th of September, when I took a long-delayed holiday and went to Cologne and on to Munich—a city I had always loved, and which was then one of the most brilliant and exhilarating in Europe. I went over to Augsburg again, and to Regensburg and Nuremberg, and had the new experience of feeling able to spend money in antiquity shops without too much regard for the cost, as the returns from the Box Office continued to be excellent.

I returned to London towards the end of October, and a little later met Mr. Van der Poorten Schwartz, the Dutch novelist, and his daughter at dinner with the Edmund Gosses in Hanover Terrace, which, little as I knew it, was to be my last dinner-party for some months to come.

*The Brass Bottle*, I found, was holding its own, but I noticed that 'Pit full' was the only board out, and, on seeing the play, that there was one row of stalls less; it was a foggy Monday night in November, and the audience were by no means as responsive as that on the 16th of September. I went behind and saw several of the company in their dressing-rooms and found them cheerful, while the play seemed to be going smoothly and well. Still, I came away a little depressed and disappointed.

Early next morning I had even more reason for depression, for I awoke with a cough which terrified me by leaving me nearly choked. My doctor thought it was laryngitis at first, and prescribed remedies which he said would prevent any further attacks. But they didn't; the attacks grew more and more frequent and violent, and the sensation of fighting for breath, as if one was drowning, was peculiarly horrible. Nor was I much reassured when I was told it was due to spasmodic asthma, a trouble which was quite likely to last indefinitely. But at length,

improbable as it seemed at my age, it was pronounced to be whooping cough, and after that, knowing that it would only inconvenience me for a time, I found it bearable enough.

The worst part of it was my enforced isolation. I was able to go out, but not to mix with my fellow creatures, I could accept no invitations, go to no place of entertainment, I could not even enter a train or omnibus, and took my walks abroad with a feeling that I ought to have a bell at my knee-cap like a medieval leper. My sister and brothers came to see me frequently, but I could not go to them, and for the first time in my life, I had to eat my Christmas dinner alone, and found it very far from festive.

Holman Clark was my only link with the Vaudeville; he had had whooping cough, and we arranged to meet fairly often in Kensington Gardens and walk eastwards together.

I could already gather from the daily box-office returns that *The Brass Bottle* was not fulfilling its early promise, and though Holman was always encouraging, I began to doubt whether it would outlast the year.

One Saturday afternoon early in December, just after I had heard that he was ill with 'flu and unable to appear, I went down the Strand as far as the Vaudeville, expecting the worst, but was agreeably surprised to see the announcement, 'House Full', over the entrance, and boards out for every part of the house.

But on Monday the return for Saturday showed that about half of that audience must have been 'paper'; and the subsequent returns showed on the whole a decidedly downward tendency. I was told, as dramatists usually are in such circumstances, that this was only to be expected at the time of year, and that the business was quite as good as that of other theatres.

It improved to some extent on Boxing Day, but went down again by the beginning of the New Year. Nowadays,

with the increased rent of theatres and expenses generally, its career would have ended before it reached a hundred performances; as it was, it managed to carry on for two hundred and forty-four—a fair, but by no means a sensational run, especially in view of what had been anticipated for it. However, I am glad to think that neither Mayer nor its backers lost their money; it was taken on tour with an excellent company, which included Holman, and did quite well on the whole.

I hope it will not be imagined that I have given this account in such detail from any exaggerated idea of the play's importance. I am perfectly well aware that—although I think it has some claims to originality and a certain kind of realistic fantasy—it has added nothing to the history of the stage.

But the story of its fortunes may be of some use to aspiring dramatists as a warning against building extravagant hopes on a first night success, however decisive it may seem.

The terms I obtained from Mayer for the run of the play at the Vaudeville and in the provinces were on the usual scale, but although *The Brass Bottle* brought me in a far larger sum than I had ever expected before its production, that sum was small enough in comparison with what the author of a successful play would receive nowadays.

My receipts for the London run, and a provincial and Australian tour, were considerably below three thousand pounds. The Vaudeville is not a large theatre, and after the first few weeks was not filled to anything like capacity.

Of course, I might have more than doubled this amount if *The Brass Bottle* had been a success in the United States.

Charles Frohman, who had first commissioned the play but had been dissatisfied with it, changed his mind after the production, and acquired the American rights, and the

play was produced at the Lyceum Theatre, New York, in August 1910.

He might have had the services of Kerr or Mercanton there, but he preferred to produce it according to his own ideas, and, or so I gathered, made the Oriental ballet in the second act—which at the Vaudeville had been as short as possible—a highly elaborate feature.

However this may have been, the play seems to have lasted an interminable time on the first night; the critics pronounced it dull, and consisting of 'a sea of words'—and it ran for just a fortnight.

As a matter of fact there are no long speeches in *The Brass Bottle*, as any one who cares to read the play in print will find, and the dialogue, though undoubtedly too redundant at first, was reduced to the lowest possible limits; the play, it is true, was in four acts, but in England began at 8.30 and was over by 11 o'clock.

But the American taste in humorous plays differs widely from ours, and it is rarely that a comedy pleases audiences on both sides of the Atlantic. And then, as I have said elsewhere, my particular vein of humour has never, except perhaps in the case of *Vice Versâ*, appealed at all to the American public. So that I was not much surprised by the brief career of *The Brass Bottle* in New York.

On the 20th of February 1910 I saw Sambourne, who was laid up in bed with what was then thought to be acute indigestion; but although he talked hopefully of being able to work again in a month I feared, as I noted in my journal at the time, that he was seriously ill.

On the 5th of May he came once more to the *Punch* dinner looking very pale and shrunken, breathing with some difficulty and talking very little; after dinner he smoked a cigarette and left before the discussion of the Cartoons.

In this year I was invited to call on an income-tax official and bring my accounts with me. So I went to an address in Dover Street where I found a very urbane gentleman behind a large writing-table. 'I've brought you my books for the last three years,' I began, and was about to produce them when he courteously waved them aside. 'I won't trouble you to do that,' he said. 'But—we'll play with all cards on the table, eh?'

I had no notion what he meant but expressed my willingness to play with him on those terms. 'Well,' he said, 'you have had a play running at the Vaudeville lately, have you not?' I said that was so. 'Well,' he said again, 'we happen to know that the box-office receipts for last February amounted to (so-and-so). Why does not your percentage on that appear in your last return?'

I explained that, having the alternative of making my return either from April to April, or from the beginning of January to the end of December in each year, I had always chosen the latter period, consequently the February and March items belonged to the present year and would appear in my next return.

Whereupon not only did he express himself as perfectly satisfied, but we suddenly became the best of friends, and before we parted, he actually showed me how I might obtain a reduction in future by claiming that a part of my flat was occupied by me for professional purposes.

So I came away with the pleasant reflection that an income-tax surveyor can be human after all.

But it amused me to discover what a lynx-like eye the department kept on unconscious dramatists.

On Friday the 6th of May it was announced for the first time that King Edward had been confined to his room since Monday by an attack of bronchitis and that his physicians admitted 'some cause for anxiety'. I read the bulletin outside the gates of Buckingham Palace that

afternoon: 'No improvement in the symptoms. His Majesty's condition causes grave anxiety.'

That evening 'The King's condition now critical' glared in huge letters on the newspaper contents-sheets, and just after 1 a.m. on Saturday morning I heard from my flat in Duke Street Mansions the raucous night cry which I had learnt to know and dread during the South African War as of evil omen, and as it came nearer I heard 'A-larmin' noos ter night! Death of the King!' and tried to hope that it was not true.

But it was confirmed by Saturday's papers. King Edward VII had died at a quarter to twelve on Friday night. The blow had fallen on the nation with terrible suddenness, for except to a very limited circle it was quite unknown till the day of the King's death that he was even laid up.

I saw the funeral procession on Friday, May 20th, from Mr. George Murray Smith's house near the northern end of Park Lane; the gun-carriage was drawn by eight dark bay horses, and on the coffin draped with the Royal Standard were the crown and orb. Behind it were led the King's charger and his favourite white-haired terrier Caesar. After them rode King George, between the Kaiser on his right and the Duke of Connaught on his left, followed by the Kings of Norway, Spain, Greece, Bulgaria, Denmark, and Portugal, the heir to the Turkish throne, Archduke Ferdinand of Austria, and various princes, among them Prince Danilo of Montenegro in a black lambswool cap and loose white sleeves.

Then came a state coach with the Queen Mother, the Empress of Russia, the Princess Royal, and Princess Victoria, a second with Queen Mary, the Queen of Norway, the present King, in naval uniform, and Princess Mary, and more carriages with other members of the Royal Family. There were twelve coaches altogether, and in the eighth was ex-President Theodore Roosevelt.

A detachment of Life Guards and mounted police brought up the rear.

The immense crowd was extraordinarily quiet. Just before the procession passed a dog strayed into the line of route and ran about in terror as dogs generally do during any procession and cause general laughter. But even the most thoughtless were in no mood for laughter then, the dog was not even noticed.

On Wednesday the 25th of May, A. A. Milne made his first appearance at the *Punch* Table, and poor dear Sambourne dined there for the last time; he had grown very feeble and was accompanied to and from Bouverie Street by a hospital nurse. He died on Wednesday the 3rd of August, beloved and regretted by us all.

In June and July I was in pleasant lodgings at Framlingham in Suffolk; my landlady told me, among many other things, that the Suffolk Yeomanry only attended King Edward's funeral on condition that they were not required to march behind any Territorials. She discovered that I was an author, and said, 'I don't think I've ever read any of your books, or if I have, I've forgotten them.' I have once or twice met authors myself to whom I might with a little candour have made the same admission.

While at Framlingham I wrote a short story, 'The Changelings' for *The Strand Magazine*.

On Saturday, August 6th, after attending the funeral service at St. Mary Abbot's for Linley Sambourne, I went to stay a few days with Dr. M. R. James, who was then Provost of King's, and on the 26th started with him for another pleasant cycling tour in France.

Visiting cathedrals, churches, and castles in the Provost's company adds immensely to their interest, and I learnt and saw far more than I should have, had I seen them as a solitary tourist. But all I shall record here is a



story the Provost told me of a fiery little Welsh parson he had met, who indignantly asked some one who had questioned his statements: 'Do you take me for a coward or a mice or a foolish nonsense?'

On Sunday the 6th of November I spent an hour with John Tenniel, who had completely recovered from his serious illness in February and was now well and hearty. He had had to leave his house in Portsdown Road because his sister's lameness made it impossible for her to go up and down stairs, so his flat in FitzGeorge Avenue was on the ground floor. But he could not reconcile himself to living in a flat. 'When I first came in,' he told me with his characteristically half-humorous petulance, 'I could just make out a long corridor painted white with a lot of doors on each side, and I said "Good God! it's like a prison!"' He objected to the noise, particularly that of the coals being carried up in the service lift, which was next to his bedroom.

He told me with comic disgust that his former house was now an Art School for Women. I supposed they would call it 'The Tenniel Studio'. 'They'd better *not*!' said Tenniel.

Even then he was not absolutely blind; he wore a green shade over his eye and could just manage to see his way about, for he showed me an oak chest full of his drawings and a fine Jacobean cabinet and some armour in his hall.

We talked of the old Gallery of Illustration, and he told me that Burnand's yachting papers in *Punch* were derived from a cruise on German Reed's yacht, and that his daughter for some reason strongly resented them.

I came away with the impression that on the whole Tenniel was fairly cheerful and resigned to his new surroundings.

About this time I was working tentatively on an idea for a fantastic story in which a suburban family should be

magically transported to a Fairy Kingdom, but eventually, finding that it was not working out as satisfactorily as I wished, I laid it aside and it was not until three years later that I decided to attempt it once more.

Meanwhile I had been re-writing my three-act version of *Vice Versâ*, which, after being rejected several times by various managers, was eventually accepted by genial Arthur Chudleigh for the Comedy Theatre.

As in the case of *The Brass Bottle*, we found during rehearsals that a skilled producer was urgently needed, and I sent the script to Charles Hawtrey, asking whether he could come to our rescue. He replied that he was worn out by rehearsals of *Inconstant George*, in which he had just successfully appeared at the Prince of Wales's, otherwise, &c., &c. Kerr was unavailable, and I was feeling rather hopeless, when a day or two later Charles wrote again to say that he was much interested in the play and that, from old friendship to me, he would see us through six rehearsals without the usual fee. This was generous enough, but he was better than his word, for he attended many more rehearsals than six, and more than once went without lunch in his anxiety for our success.

And so, thanks to his disinterested efforts, all went well on the first night, November 10th, 1910.

We had an admirable company: Arthur Playfair, in a make-up which I sketched for him, was an absolutely perfect 'Prep' schoolmaster.

Frederick Volpé was equally good as Paul Bultitude, and Spencer Trevor, though his physique obliged him after the transformation to suggest rather a testy professor than a pompous business man, gave an extremely clever and artistic performance. The Uncle Marmaduke of C. M. Lowne was exactly right. Miss Phyllis Embury was the Dulcie, a part which Charles Hawtrey found required some one older and more experienced than lovely

little Mary Glynne (now that charming and popular actress Mrs. Denis Neilson-Terry), who had been our first selection. I have seldom had a more distressing experience than when I had to tell her of Hawtrey's decision, though she accepted it most sweetly and pluckily.

The two under-masters, Leveson Lane and Brian Egerton, were excellent, and as for the boys, no words can describe how good they were. In 1883, when Rose's version was produced, boys of good breeding and education were rarely to be found on the stage, and in consequence deficient 'h's' and cockney accents were the rule in the Crichton House at the Strand, the one exception being the Tipping, who was played by Edward Bell. He was a nephew of Edward Poynter and over twenty, though he looked no more than sixteen in the part. But one rather wondered why he wasn't at a better-class school.

But at the Comedy in 1910, the boys, besides being extremely intelligent and capital fellows, looked and spoke exactly as the play required. Two of them, Robert Andrews and Jack Hobbs, are now, after serving with distinction through the Great War, high in their profession. Two others, who also went to the Front, lost their lives there.

*Vice Versâ* was produced as a Christmas play, and performed at matinées only—the evening play being *The Marionettes*, in which the late Sir John Hare was playing the leading part. 'Marmaduke Paradine' in *Vice Versâ*, on being told that Dick wanted to go upstairs and see the marionettes at his party, had to say, 'Oh, damn the Marionettes', and I found that John Hare, whom I had known for years, resented this as an improvised allusion to his own play. Of course I assured him that it had been written long before, and offered to alter it; he expressed himself as quite satisfied with my explanation at the time, but I had an impression that that unfortunate line still rankled.

*Vice Versâ* was favourably noticed by the critics, some of whom prophesied that it would be revived annually at Christmas—a prediction which was not to be fulfilled. But it had a fair run at the Comedy, and I was the gainer by three hundred and thirty-three pounds. The next year it was revived at the Globe Theatre, but did less well there. It has been frequently performed by amateurs ever since, and in December 1931 it was produced for a fortnight's run at the Sheffield Repertory Theatre, where it did well enough to justify the run being extended to a third week.

In the early part of 1911 I was again at work on the story which I have already mentioned and which I then called 'Crowned Heads', but did not get beyond a rough draft.

One evening in March of that year I saw what I thought a pretty incident in Oxford Street—a small child outside a toyshop saying good night to her favourite toys in the window.

At a dinner-party early in 1911 I met a man who had had some official connexion with a Post-Impressionist Exhibition and described how an indignant British matron came up to him one day and said: 'I am Mrs. So-and-so. I feel I must make a protest against all this. My name is in the Court Guide.' 'By all means,' he said; 'would you like to make it in writing? Here are ink and paper.' So she sat down and wrote: 'I consider this Exhibition a degradation to all true Art.' 'And now,' he asked, after she had handed him the document, 'what would you like me to do with this? Shall I send it to the newspapers, or lay it before the Committee, or what?' 'No,' she said, 'I don't want anything done with it. I'm quite satisfied with having expressed my feelings. Good morning.'

There was an elderly man, he said, on whom Post-Impression caused a different reaction; he visited the

Gallery every day, sat on a seat in the centre room and laughed himself out of breath for a quarter of an hour.

Nowadays, of course, we have all learnt that nothing is Art which is in the least like Nature, and are incapable of betraying our lack of culture by protesting or laughing at the wildest monstrosities, but the full beauty of ugliness had not begun to dawn upon us then.

In the Art Gallery at the White City that May I came upon an elderly long-haired father with two daughters and an air of extreme culture. They were standing before a rather indifferent representation of Salome and Herod; the father said, 'Ah! A feast of Cul-lah!' (which it wasn't by any means) and one of the daughters replied, 'Yes. Quite a new idea of Salome, isn't it?' At the next picture he remarked, 'Enoch Arden. Ah, a poem of Longfellow's. He comes back and finds his wife married to another.' And the second daughter said brightly, '*I see. Rather like Rip Van Winkle!*'

On Wednesday, May 24th, I lunched at the Burlington Hotel with the Dramatists' Club, of which I am a member. W. S. Gilbert sat opposite to me and I thought how well he was looking and how much younger than his actual age, which I knew to be about seventy-four, with his hair as thick as ever, his deep-set grey eyes under heavy eyebrows, and his clear high-coloured complexion. He told us in his quiet effective voice of a young American couple he had travelled with lately, who were visiting England for the first time and were immensely amused by the epithet 'bloody', which they used by way of a joke on every occasion until he felt obliged to caution them against the practice. (It is odd, by the way, to think that in these days, to judge from popular novels and plays at least, this colourful adjective has long received the sanction of the best society. But in 1911 it was not so.)

Before leaving he proposed a candidate for election but

suggested that it could stand over 'until we met in September'.

On the following Monday afternoon, while swimming in his private lake at Grim's Dyke, he just managed to save a girl guest who had got out of her depth, and then collapsed himself from heart failure—as good an end to a long and successful life as a man could desire.

I had known him for a good many years and always liked and admired him, while, perhaps because he recognized me as a disciple, I never found him other than genial and friendly or felt the rough side of his tongue.

Nor have I ever heard him say anything scathing to any one myself. Once, I remember, I met him at dinner at the Barry Pains and one of the party, after mentioning that he was selling his car, said sentimentally, 'You know, when one's had a car in constant use for several years—well, it's hard to part with it.' 'Hard to get rid of it!' snapped Gilbert.

At another dinner-party the talk had turned on capital punishment and a lady said to him, 'Come, Mr. Gilbert, I'm sure *you* couldn't bear to see any one hanged!' 'If I could only choose my man,' he said, 'I'd see a dozen.'

More than once he spoke disparagingly to me of his Savoy libretti and expressed something like disgust that it should have been 'nonsense like that' and not his serious work that had brought him fame. But the truth, though he never realized it, was that his nonsense happened to be inspired by genius while his serious plays, with the possible exception of *Dan'l Druce*, never quite rang true and sometimes had an odd suggestion of Savoy opera in their most pathetic scenes.

His best prose comedy, *Engaged*, though it had a moderately successful run at the Haymarket in 1877, and in a later revival elsewhere, was not appreciated either by the critics or the public as highly as I think its wildly original humour deserved. One leading critic, I remember,

took it with deadly seriousness and accused Gilbert of cynicism and heartlessness and improbability and most other faults. But I still look back on it as the most irresistibly funny play from its opening to the final curtain that I have ever seen.

That very charming actress, the late Miss Marion Terry, told me a few years before her death that when Gilbert, after offering her the part of Belinda Treherne in this play, read it aloud to her she burst into tears. 'My dear child,' said Gilbert, 'this isn't a tragedy, you know!' And she said, 'I'm only crying because I know I shall never be able to play it!' But she did—and played it incomparably, looking most enchanting and speaking her wildly absurd lines with delightful unconsciousness.

Gilbert himself once told me a remark of his at rehearsal which I think in these laxer days I need not abstain from recording. In one of the stage sets was a large semi-circular marble bench, and the leading actress, anxious to add a touch of realism to it, said to him, 'Mr. Gilbert, I read the other day that the ancient Greeks had a charming habit of inscribing some beautiful thought on their seats——.' 'Ah,' said Gilbert, 'an *arrière-pensée*, I suppose?' And, greatly to her credit, her reply was merely, 'Yes, one of *them*.'

One evening I was at a musical party at his house in Eaton Square; he did not appear till late and explained to me: 'You know—I'm fond of music—for a quarter of an hour or so, but I'm not greedy about it. You may be fond of mutton without wanting to eat a whole leg at a sitting.'

But I believe that, though he had the marvellous sense of rhythm which made his lyrics so effective, he had little, if any, ear for music.

I spent June in rooms at Pulborough. When cycling one day to Haslemere, I stopped at Northchapel Church

to see a tablet I remembered noticing on the south wall. It was no longer there, but eventually I discovered it in the vestry hidden away behind surplices, and made a copy of it which I give here:

*Beneath this window lieth Mary [surname illegible]  
who died a virgin August 11th 1733 aged [illegible,  
but either 11 or 13].*

*While living she a Salver gave  
To Him who dyed her soul to save.  
Out of that Store which God her lent  
She left five pounds to the Indigent.  
Live then like her, and thou'lt not miss  
With her t'injoy eternal bliss.*

I have always liked the idea of reciprocity suggested by the first couplet, and Mary's bequest to the Indigent in the fourth line would not sound amiss in a Gilbertian libretto.

Passing an inn at Pulborough one evening I heard some one in the bar-parlour singing a song with this pathetic refrain:

*Still they come! Still they come!  
Quite a percession, they come in succession!  
Bailiffs and summonses  
(Some on 'em rum 'uns is!)  
Doctors and nurses,  
The babies I curses!  
There 's no end o' trouble for me!*

Which may have been from a popular ditty of that time, but I never heard it before or since, and I give it here as not a bad example of the revelations of domestic misfortune with which music-hall comedians used to delight their audiences. At Pulborough it seemed to be received with grave concern.

At Steyning I came upon a placard which pleased me so



much by its patriotic spirit that I took a copy of it. Here it is:

THE TWO GREATEST EVENTS OF 1911

*The Coronation and*

*The Beeding and Bramber Floral and Horticultural  
Society's First Annual Flower Show*

Wednesday Aug. 16th

And I missed both!

Sir Owen Seaman had been asked to write a Coronation Ode for some function and it was recited by Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson; Seaman told me at the *Punch* dinner that July how a certain well-known actor had come up to him and said effusively, 'I congratulate you—on having Forbes to recite your Ode!'

Which reminded me of an experience of my own after the first night of *The Man from Blankley's* at the Prince of Wales's, when Hawtrey introduced me to a dignified person who said in much the same words, 'I congratulate you—on—ah—not coming before the curtain.'

Such compliments turn no heads.

On the 3rd of August I went to see Tenniel again and thought him looking changed and much paler, with a hand so shaky that it was evidently difficult for him to lift his pipe to his mouth. He had lost his sister since I saw him last, and he told me she had never got over her fall at the house in Portsdown Road. 'But she was happy while she lived here,' he said. 'She couldn't walk but it amused her to try to get about in a bath chair.' He asked me whether he was represented in the *Punch* show of drawings at the White City. I said, 'Naturally, considering that you were the mainstay of the paper for forty years!' On which he said he remembered now that Lawrence Bradbury had asked him to send some drawings and he supposed he had.

He was still unreconciled to his flat. 'A mere makeshift for a house!' he said. 'Everything cramped into the smallest space! I don't know now where any of my things are—when I came here first I could see well enough to make out the title of a book. Now I can see nothing of course.' When I was leaving he thanked me for 'taking the trouble of coming', on which I protested, 'Now, Tenniel, you know perfectly well that it's a pleasure to me to come!' and he said gently, 'Yes, I know that. I know that.'

The German dispute with France over Southern Morocco was at its height that August, and England was more or less included in it. In Nuremberg the bookshops were announcing that a German work entitled *Morocco! War with England* was already in its hundred and twenty-fifth thousand, and in a Viennese paper dated about the 26th of August we read an interview with the British Ambassador in which he stated that in the event of war between Germany and France (which looked inevitable) England would side with the latter country. At that time and during the next four years England was certainly regarded by Germany as her most likely enemy. The booksellers' windows were full of copies of a book with the title *Der Nächste Krieg* and a picture on the cover of a German battleship sinking one flying the White Ensign.

Which makes it the more curious that Germany should have been genuinely surprised by the course England was compelled to take in 1914.

In September and October 1911 I was in rooms at Fairford.

In Burford Church I found some verses on the tomb of L.C.J. Sir Lawrence Tanfild, written by his widow, the last stanza of which runs:

*Love made me Poet  
And this I writt  
My Harte did doe yt  
And not my Witt.*

which struck me as pretty and touching, though the poor lady's verses as a whole certainly do more credit to her heart than her head.

Near Malmesbury I found an inn, the proprietress of which bore the almost incredible name of Theodosia Scaplehorn, a surname which I noted for use but never found a character worthy to bear.

While at Fairford I did some articles for *Punch* as well as the play, but as usual, when in the country, I was out on my bicycle for the greater part of every day. In a general shop at Minchinhampton one afternoon I heard an anxious mother say to her little girl, 'Don't play with that gas stove, darling, or you'll be blown up.' To which the child replied: 'I'd *like* to be blown up.'

Near Burford I found an inn with the sign of 'The Merry Month', and somewhere near Cirencester one even more unusual, the 'Who'd have thought it'.

One night at Fairford just before going to bed I was putting my lips to a whisky and soda when a sepulchral voice outside sardonically remarked, 'Your 'elth,' and I realized that, by the aid of a lamp and a drawn blind, I must be offering an enviable silhouette to the man in the street. Somehow this made me laugh so much that it did not occur to me to offer the speaker a drink until too late. I certainly owed him one.

At luncheon, after my return to London, I was told of a host whose pose was to affect sublime indifference to the pleasures of the table and who asked his guest, 'Will you have some wine? One's white and the other's red, but I never know which is which.'

On Christmas Eve 1911 I went to see Tenniel, who was still fairly well, though he told me he had given up going out now because when he did he had an unpleasant sensation of walking down a steep incline between high cliffs, and for an hour after returning the room would seem to spin round. He told me how when he sat alone he constantly saw extraordinarily vivid scenes on the opposite wall. 'Sometimes it's a troop of cavalry riding by and I see every man and horse distinctly and even hear the clinking of their bits, or else it's a row of very serious persons dressed like judges and holding some important trial; it amuses me as a rule, but it gets to worry me at times—they're mere fancies, of course.' As he left his study and turned off the electric light, he said triumphantly, 'There, you see—I managed to find the switch. . . . Oh, I shall be cheerful enough this Christmas. I haven't much to complain of—my health keeps good.' He had a devoted lady companion who read aloud to him all day and saw generally to his comfort.

I own that after the success of *The Brass Bottle* I had imagined that I should have no difficulty in placing any subsequent play, but in this I deceived myself. I ought to have remembered that *The Man from Blankley's*, though it had a fair run in 1901 and a very prosperous one at the Haymarket in 1906, had not inspired managers with any belief in me as a dramatist, and so it was after 1909.

In 1911 I made a three-act version of my story *The Tinted Venus*, which went the round in vain. I was told that it was too like a farce called *Niobe—all Smiles*, which appeared years after my story, and had no other resemblance to it than that there was an animated statue in both, as for that matter there is in *Pygmalion and Galatea*.

One manager said he would do my play, *A Statue at Large*, if I would wait till *Niobe* was forgotten. I still think that, with a competent cast, my farce would not have

been a failure; its opening scene (in the Sculpture Gallery of a Country House, with, among the Bank Holiday visitors, a couple of crooks, who, finding that the gold racing cups they were interested in were kept at the owner's bank, decided that the statue of Venus would be well worth removing) was more plausible than in the original, and the incidents and dialogue throughout might have proved effective on the stage. But no management had faith enough to risk the venture, and in these days, at all events, their caution would be justified.

Then I dramatized another story of mine, *Love among the Lions*, and I believe that for a time Frederic Harrison really was inclined to accept this for the Haymarket. There was a day when I met him by the portico of his theatre while he was still considering my play, and he pointed to the boards round the pillars and said, 'I hope to see *your* name there before very long,' which, although I knew his tendency to put things pleasantly, I could not help thinking an encouraging sign. But I did not like to press him for a more definite indication, and a day or two after my script returned to me with his usual gracefully worded expressions of regret. Other managers put their opinions with less consideration, and long before the War I had come to realize that I should have to be content with such success as I had already gained, for it would never be repeated.

In February 1912 I met George Alexander at a dinner-party when he told a curious story of Oscar Wilde. During the hearing of his action for libel against Lord Queensberry he took a box at the St. James's, where his brilliant comedy *The Importance of being Earnest* was being performed, and showed himself there with a friend connected with the case. Afterwards Alexander told him that this was in bad taste and that whether he was innocent or guilty he would be wise to leave England. To which

Wilde replied, 'My dear Alec, I've consulted Mrs. Robinson, the palmist, who tells me I shall come out of this successfully.'

On another occasion Alexander told me how he had been driving along one of the Paris boulevards some time after Wilde's release from prison, and seeing him on the footpath had stopped his *fiacre* and got out to speak to him. Wilde had seemed unemotional at the time, but the next day had written him a long and touching letter of gratitude for speaking to him.

I like a story I heard of a lady who, when applied to for a subscription to a Society for Converting Jews, said, 'No, thank you; they're well off. Let 'em pay for their own conversion!'

One day that March I met Hector Munro (Saki) at the Ladies' Park Club; he was rather short, dark-haired, and clean-shaven, with one side of his face very slightly out of drawing and he had a soft and remarkably pleasant voice. I find a note of an anecdote he told that afternoon of a man who when seized by sudden and violent hunger found that he had nothing but a penny in his pocket. Fortunately, however, he came upon an automatic chocolate machine outside a shop, eagerly put in his penny and got a box of matches.

Lady Charnwood, on whom I was calling one afternoon, gave me a delightful description of a talk she had had with Edmund Gosse after dinner at her own house the week before. Gosse had been speaking enthusiastically to her of the natural unaffected way in which he had seen a certain French lady touching up her face in public on a railway platform. Lady Charnwood said that she did not see anything so very admirable in the performance. 'Ah,' said Gosse, 'that's because you're too artificial yourself.'

'Oh, well, of course,' she admitted, 'when we came upstairs this evening and your little Sylvia took out her paint and powder-puff and began——' 'My daughter!' Gosse cried, turning magenta. 'My daughter did *that*?' 'Well, as a matter of fact, she didn't,' said Lady Charnwood, 'but supposing she *bad*——' And Gosse said, 'I cannot recollect any previous occasion on which my leg has been more successfully elongated.'

In April 1912 I thought my luck had turned, for David Devant asked me to write a sketch for St. George's Hall, and liked the idea of a version of my *Fallen Idol*, which I suggested as the only subject I could think of.

I did it with some enjoyment and, after interminable delays, it was produced in January 1913, unfortunately without success. It was too long, for one thing, and rather bored the audiences who came to see it. I can claim the unenviable distinction of being the only author who ever wrote a sketch for Maskelyne and Devant that proved an utter failure.

But among the small but excellent company which my friend Rudge Harding enabled me to collect for it I made some very pleasant acquaintances, and one great and lasting friendship, for which I have had increasing cause to be grateful. So that—except from Messrs. Maskelyne and Devant's point of view—this adventure left little for regret.

I spent June 1912 in rooms at Staplehurst, where I came across a copy of Old Moore's Almanac with his predictions for the year 1913, of which I made some extracts. That for April was: 'Enemies of Great Britain active. Change in relations between Great Britain and Germany.' For May: '*A casus belli* may be easily invented.'

If Old Moore had only postponed his predictions for twelve months or so his reputation as a prophet would

have been established for all time. He was only a little too previous.

On the 22nd of July I was distressed by the announcement that Andrew Lang had died suddenly at Banchory on the previous Saturday.

Next to James Payn I owed my first success, as I have said elsewhere, to Andrew Lang, whom I did not know at that time, though I afterwards saw a great deal of him. Except that his 'brindled hair' had become almost white his appearance had not altered at all during the thirty years of our acquaintance; he was always slender and curiously distinguished, with something of the look of a mournful stag and an air of languor and boredom which quickly vanished when anything appealed to his keen sense of humour. He was enthusiastic on three subjects—cricket, fishing, and folk-lore; he was a fine scholar, as his translation of the *Odyssey* with S. H. Butcher and other books testify; he wrote charming light verse and some humorous short stories, and one most ingenious longer one *The Mark of Cain*, in which the flying machine was anticipated long before its actual advent. It was Lang who discovered Stevenson and introduced him and lesser authors to the reading public with characteristic and generous enthusiasm.

He had his prejudices, like most of us, and absolutely refused to see any merit whatever in what he christened 'The New Humour', which he treated, I think, with quite undeserved contempt.

But whether captious, sardonic, interested, or amused, there was always something arresting and fascinating in Andrew Lang.

In August 1912 I had another pleasant cycling tour with Dr. M. R. James and A. B. Ramsay, during which we saw Autun, Beaune, Nuits, Dijon, Auxerre, rode down



through the pass from Pontarlier to Neuchâtel, on to Fribourg and Berne, and back by Sens and Moret to Paris.

I find a note in my journal of that tour recording a story of a certain very majestic and awe-inspiring headmaster of Eton, who, on paying a surprise visit to the fifth form, found them all very behindhand in their work and rebuked them with tremendous severity. After which he opened a door, and saying, 'Mind now, I shall come and see you again in a fortnight!' he made a dignified exit into a large cupboard, out of which he emerged in increased ill humour.

I doubt whether any one laughed at the time, but it must have been an experience none of them would willingly have missed.

Dr. James also told me of a certain reprobate old Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, dead long before either his time or mine, who when complimented by some one on the success of his son at the Bar, replied, 'My nevvvy, Sir, my nevvvy! Fellows of King's don't have sons!' He lived to a great age without losing his zest for life and could often be observed poking up worms with his stick on the college lawns and crying triumphantly, 'Blast ye! Ye haven't got me yet!'

I find the following entry for October 12th, 1912, based on that evening's news. 'Bulgaria likely to declare war immediately. General impression that Austria and Russia must be drawn in before long and hence the whole of Europe ending in the long-threatened Armageddon.'

But the danger passed by the end of the year, which was perhaps why, when it returned again in 1914, so few believed that this time no human efforts could avert it.

The year 1913 was not a fortunate one so far as I was concerned. I did a one-act eccentric farce founded on a short story of mine, 'Why I have given up writing novels', but, after showing it to one or two experienced friends,

agreed with them that it had no possibilities for the stage, and put it aside as another of my failures.

I had one or two proposals for collaboration in plays, which proposals, however, came to nothing; I wrote a short story, found it unexpectedly difficult, and never succeeded in getting it accepted, and I got hung up with my Fairyland story.

On the 22nd of July I went to see Tenniel, whom I found in bed with severe coughing attacks as the after result of 'flu. He told me he was now stone blind, and spoke as though he did not expect to leave his bed again. He said, 'It's a great compliment when my old friends come to see me,' and, as I said good-bye, quoted:

*If we do meet again, why, we shall smile;  
If not, why, then, this parting was well made.*

I saw him again on the 6th of August, when he was sitting in his study. He talked of his fondness for rowing, adding, 'All that is over for me.' Once he said, 'I forget names and everything now,' and I thought myself that his memory was failing. But his mind was quite clear, nevertheless. I gave him my reasons for not attending a certain function, on which he said, 'Well, of course, if you feel like that—but the fact is, you don't *want* to go!' Which was in truth the case.

In August I again cycled with Dr. M. R. James and Ramsay in France, a tour which, delightful as I found it, needs no description here. In the courtyard of our hotel at Albertville I was pleased by the lofty amusement of a party of British motorists on discovering our bicycles: 'Actually some push-bikes!' they told one another, with the air of discoverers of prehistoric remains. It was incredible to them that any sane human beings could care to propel themselves when there were cars to carry them, or

be content with a day's journey of thirty miles or so when they might run hundreds with no exertion at all.

But though we got their dust, they never gave us the least desire to exchange vehicles with them.

On the road from St. Omer to Boulogne Dr. James and I were stopped by a couple of *douaniers* who told us that our bicycles ought to have been furnished with metal *plaques* at a cost of three francs each, and insisted that we should accompany them back to St. Omer and repair this omission.

We politely declined to do anything of the sort, as we had been in France for three weeks without any intimation that *plaques* were required, and had no reason to think they were compulsory.

We argued the point with them, until one of them lost his temper to such an extent that I began to think we should end the afternoon in the nearest Mairie, but eventually we wore them down, and the more choleric of the two decided that 'nous n'avons pas le temps de nous embêter avec vous autres', after which they made a dignified retreat. I believe they both knew that their demand was quite unjustifiable, and were naturally the more annoyed with us for resisting it. I have never been so near passing a night in a French cell.

In my journal for October I find a story of an Englishman in Switzerland who engaged a guide to go with him after chamois, which he had never before had an opportunity of stalking. After a long climb over tremendous heights they saw a herd of chamois feeding within range. 'Now mind,' said the guide impressively, 'don't fire till I tell you, because, if you miss, they'll all be off and you'll never see one of them again!' And while the Englishman obediently waited for the word, the guide loosed off his own rifle—and his prediction was verified; the whole herd disappeared, and were seen no more. The guide's excuse was that he thought his employer would be too nervous to

hit anything—which was not found as satisfactory as he seemed to expect.

At the end of that month, just as I was finishing a short story entitled *Sparkling Biacrene*, I was horribly scared by finding that my right hand shook so violently that I could hardly write at all. My brother Leonard told me that it was a form of writer's cramp, and advised me not to attempt writing for a month or two. Fortunately the trouble, after continuing for about a week, suddenly disappeared, and I am thankful to say has never returned. I had managed to get my story finished in spite of it, and *Sparkling Biacrene* was accepted by the Editor of the *Strand Magazine*—to my great relief, as I had begun to fear that nothing I might write would escape being 'declined with thanks'. Possibly the worry and anxiety of such fear had a great deal to do with the attack of writer's cramp, for it left me on the day I heard that my story had passed muster.

I met Hector Munro again at an evening party on the 12th of December, when he gave an extremely funny imitation of Sarah Bernhardt reciting a French version of 'The Walrus and the Carpenter'. This was the last time that I saw 'Saki', whose death at the front two or three years later was to deprive his country of one of her most brilliant humorists—a writer who, though he had done so much, had not nearly arrived at his full powers.

But at the close of 1913 no one imagined that our days of peace and security were already numbered. I saw 1914 in at a cheery supper-party at the Carlton, when, after twelve o'clock had struck and the lights went up, and Auld Lang Syne was sung, and couples waltzed and tangoed ankle-deep in paper streamers among the tables, I think there was a general feeling—I know I had it—that the New Year was to be a happy and lucky one.

We had had some narrow escapes from Armageddon during ill-omened 1913, but we *had* escaped, and it did

not seem very likely then that we should come so near it again. And not merely at hotel supper-parties, but throughout England, the great majority of people faced the coming year without suspicion of how it was to end.

On New Year's Day I read Saki's powerful and bitter 'When William came', and, greatly as it impressed me, I saw it chiefly as remarkably able propaganda work for Lord Roberts's scheme, and thought a war with Germany a very remote contingency.

I only knew what I had read in papers and reviews, but I doubt whether those in the closest touch with foreign affairs were less optimistic on the 1st of January 1914.

## XIV

1914-1918

EARLY in January 1914 I again took up my abandoned story of a suburban family being magically transported to Fairyland, and this time with more belief and enjoyment in it, and a sense of profound relief that my period of enforced idleness was really at an end this time.

On Sunday the 1st of February I called at FitzGeorge Avenue, and was distressed to hear that Tenniel had been failing rapidly since New Year's Eve. He rambled a good deal, I was told by Miss Justice, the lady who tended him so devotedly, and—a characteristic touch this—in his wandering he was constantly pointing out faults in other people's drawings of lions and tigers. But he was conscious at intervals, and only that morning, when the nurse had asked him to put out his tongue, he had replied with something of his old petulance, 'Yes—and look like a fool!'

The doctor had said that Tenniel's heart and lungs were perfectly sound, and he was dying of nothing but old age, and might have lived longer if he had not gone blind. He was asleep when I called, but I was allowed to go into his bedroom for what I then thought would be my last sight of him, and he lay looking very much as Colonel Newcome must have looked on *his* death-bed.

But I was not only to see him, but speak to him once more, for on my next visit, a fortnight afterwards, I was told that he was awake and there was just a chance that he might know me. As I stood outside his room I heard him say, 'Do I know Guthrie? Of *course* I do! Very kind of him to come. Is he gone?' 'No,' said Miss Justice, 'would you like to see him?' And then Tenniel's voice quite loud and emphatic, 'Certainly!' On which I went in,

and he made the same touching remark about its being so kind of me to come and see him, but very soon his mind began to wander again, and I knew it was useless to stay longer.

His ramblings, I was told, still took the same form. 'That lion's all wrong!' he would say. 'And *that* isn't Britannia!' When some one asked if he was looking at a drawing of Bernard Partridge's he understood in some way and replied indignantly, 'No—no—he's a *draughtsman*—*he* wouldn't draw like that!'

Even at this stage his doctor thought he might live for some weeks yet, but he died peacefully ten days later on, February 25th, leaving behind him the memory of a great artist and a great gentleman, and one who throughout his long life must always have been utterly incapable of a mean action, or even a mean thought.

Charles Keene, though I do not think his output could have been much greater than Tenniel's, died worth seventy thousand pounds, while Tenniel left no more than a little over ten thousand. But then Charles Keene had as few personal requirements as a man in his position could well have, while Tenniel for the greater part of his life had had a fairly large establishment and kept a horse, which may partly account for the disparity, though I think it possible that Tenniel did not receive such payment for his work outside *Punch* as Keene received.

It is true that Keene was, in the opinion of artists, a better draughtsman, but one has only to imagine what his illustrations to 'Alice' would have been to realize the value of Tenniel's genius to those immortal books.

June and July that year were particularly pleasant months for me. I had delightful rooms in a fine old seventeenth-century house at Ludlow, one of the most interesting and picturesquely sited towns in England; I was well on with my book, and although I was not writing with

quite the old ease and enjoyment, I was in fair hopes of bringing it off successfully. The weather was mostly fine, and the surrounding country lovely, and as I cycled just over a thousand miles during my stay, I saw most of it within a radius of twenty-five miles.

I find a note in my journal for June 29th that the Grand Duke Ferdinand and his wife had been assassinated at Sarajevo on the 27th, but naturally I had no suspicion then of what were to be the consequences.

On July 25th there is an entry: 'Austria's ultimatum to Servia and imminent danger of European War,' but even then I thought the danger would be averted somehow. It was not until Saturday the 31st, while waiting at Shrewsbury Station, which was darkened by a sultry and sinister sky, for the London train, I read in a Liverpool evening paper of the German ultimatum to Russia, and realized that war in which we should almost inevitably be involved was now certain.

On August 1st I went down to stay with friends near Stoke Poges till the following Tuesday; in that Saturday's *Westminster Gazette* was a leader strongly urging the nation to preserve a strict neutrality during the now inevitable conflict—a leader which seemed to indicate the Government's attitude.

The general opinion of the house-party at Stoke Court was that, as we should certainly be involved in the War sooner or later, any delay on our part in coming in would be fatal to France and perilous for England, and most of us were very uneasy at the line taken by the Liberal papers.

We were a large and pleasantly heterogeneous party, among whom were Major White of the Jameson raid, Owen Seaman, Haddon Chambers, Holman Clark, W. G. Elliott, Miss Gladys Unger, Frederick Lloyd, Miss Auriol Lee, Miss Ethel Levey, Miss Laura Cowie, and Miss Phyllis Bedells, and everything would have



been perfect but for the shadow of War that hung over the world, and even this we contrived to forget very completely at times.

On Bank Holiday at the Golf Club we saw in the *Evening Standard* the opening of Sir Edward Grey's speech in the House of Commons, in which he said that England was not bound by agreement to assist France—a statement which seemed to be leading up to an announcement of our neutrality.

But in the evening two of the house-party who were members and had gone up to attend the debate came back with a reassuring account: Sir Edward had gone on to say that in certain circumstances, a German invasion of Belgium being one of them, we should have no alternative but to intervene. And it was reported that the Germans had already crossed the Belgian frontier. We were not going to play for safety after all.

I remember wondering the next morning, as I heard the cheerful whistling of the stablemen grooming their horses below my window, how long there would be any grooms left to whistle there, and whether indeed the English country-house, with its gracious hospitalities and leisured ease and comfort, might not soon be nothing but a memory.

And certainly for four years to come, country-house life of pre-war days was to be suspended, in many cases not to be revived—at least under the original owners.

On the night of Tuesday the 4th of August our ultimatum to Germany had expired and we were at War.

All my previous interests had suddenly become utterly insignificant; it was men the country wanted now—not authors, and I could not bear the idea of doing nothing, so on August 6th I went up to the Inns of Court O.T.C. Armoury in Stone Buildings and saw an old friend of mine there who put my name down on a special list,

though he told me that my age—I was 58 on August 8th—would make my acceptance doubtful.

I thought at the time that I could join as a private, and knew that I was not fitted for a commission; my ideas of what a modern war would be like were very far from approaching its grim reality. I had a vague impression, too, that, however unpleasant it might be, it would be so soon over.

But I cannot pretend that I was anything but relieved when I found, as I did later, that there was no prospect of my services being required at Berkhamsted.

Still, it was impossible to do nothing, and I was proposing to enlist as a special constable when, on August 11th, I heard from Owen Seaman of a proposal to raise a Veterans' Corps from former members of the old Inns of Court volunteers. This seemed as good a solution as any, and I attended a meeting in Lincoln's Inn, at which we appointed a Committee to arrange details.

At first our efforts met with no encouragement from the authorities, who naturally feared that any corps raised for home defence only might attract recruits of military age. When we met for drill in Temple Gardens on the 27th of August we were told that Lord Kitchener had refused to recognize us and that our original Committee had resigned. However, being convinced that we should be wanted sooner or later, we appointed another Committee and went on drilling. In November we obtained a few Lee-Metford rifles, were allowed to use the Inns of Court O.T.C. range at Harrow on certain days, and put all our members through the regulation shooting course by the following spring. But it was some months before we could drill with anything but dummy rifles, and when we were permitted to wear uniform it was on condition that it should not be mistakable for any worn by the regular forces—and ours was certainly in no danger of that.

In June 1915 we were allowed to obtain rifles of a sort

—converted Lee-Enfield carbines, a few of which were fairly accurate, but the majority so far from precision that the best shot could not hit a target with them at 100 yards. So on the range we used our three or four Lee-Metfords, which were quite to be relied on. I was relieved to find that I was no worse, and indeed rather a better shot than I had been in 1900-5.

Gradually the authorities began, as we had hoped, to make use of us. Most of our members were like myself considerably past middle age—in fact there were those who spoke of our Corps as ‘the Old Methuselahs’, but we were fit and active in spite of our years, and could dig trenches and do guard duty as efficiently as much younger men, as we proved from the summer of 1915 to the end of the War.

At least we served to relieve the regular army from these particular duties, though I never quite understood the object of our trench-digging. I believe the idea was to form a line of trenches from the East Coast to Surrey, and we certainly, under the skilled instruction of Sir Reginald Blomfield, cut turfs, and dug and revetted, and made sumps in places so far apart as Epping, Chorley Wood, and Woldingham. But I could not help thinking that there were gaps in the chain by which an invading force would have no difficulty in escaping our observation. However, Staff Officers came and inspected our labours and told us we were doing valuable work, and we hoped it was more than mere politeness on their part.

In 1916 we were inspected in Richmond Park by General Bridgeman, and in Hyde Park by Lord French, who took our salute as we marched past with several other Volunteer Corps. In August we were asked to do guard duty at Hyde Park Corner, and on Grosvenor Bridge, which we did in rotation for a year or two.

Nothing exciting happened on these occasions, though when I was on duty one May afternoon on Grosvenor

Bridge in 1917, it almost looked as though we were to figure in a sensation, for a railway official rang up the Sergeant of our Guard with the news that a highly suspicious wire was attached to one of the bridge pillars. The Sergeant rang up Scotland Yard, and then, just as the interest reached its zenith, came another message from Victoria to say that the Company found the wire had been left by one of their own men, and was quite harmless, so our chance of distinguishing ourselves ended ingloriously.

I think a bomb was dropped once during an air-raid on Grosvenor Bridge and set part of it on fire, but some other corps than ours was on guard at the time. The bridge, being used by most, if not all, troop trains, was a very vulnerable objective for Gothas, and only escaped destruction because they did not come down low enough to take any certain aim.

It was stirring, as one patrolled that bridge, to see the leave trains come in crowded with young officers and men, all in exuberant spirits; pathetic to see the profiles, sometimes forcedly cheerful, sometimes tense and set, as of those returning to Hell, at the windows of outgoing trains. Now and then a more tragic train would glide by laden with wounded from the front, destined either to die, to live maimed and mutilated, or to be cured in order to fight once more.

In all previous wars, to have been wounded, even slightly, brought an honourable release from any further fighting, but, as the Great War went on, it was not at all uncommon to see men in uniform with seven or eight golden wound-stripes on their sleeves. For the first time the bulk of our fighting force was civilian and unprofessional, and yet the millions of men that were sent out were only just enough to repair the heavy and constant losses in the ranks; as soon as any man was fit to fight again he must return and return, until either he or the War came to an end.

I never talked with any wounded man who made the least pretence of wishing to go back, but I met none who rebelled against the prospect of going; they accepted it as necessary, and when they had to go went with stolid resignation.

And no returning soldier, wounded or whole, was honoured as a hero, however well he had fought; for one thing he would have hated such a recognition, for another, courage had become a commonplace—there were too many heroes.

So, in conversation with them, it was usual to ignore the War as far as possible, which was what they themselves preferred. Only this habit became so engrained that it lasted long after the Armistice, when it cannot have been altogether soothing to the demobilized to find that the War and its incidents had become tabooed as a topic.

Of the younger members of the Inns of Court Reserve Corps several obtained commissions in the regular army, and one at least was killed at the front. Phillips, our able drill instructor in our earlier days, joined the Flying Force, got his wings, and I believe brought down at least one Gotha in France. Laurence Binyon spent two summers in France, working as an aide in a hospital for French soldiers, and Edward Warren, the brother of the late President of Magdalen, Oxford, went out to Salonica with the rank of Major in the Serbian Army. Another man in my platoon, Brinton, a doctor friend of my brother Leonard, joined the R.A.M.C. and served at the front until the Armistice.

The rest of us did what we could at home, drilling, trench-digging, &c., going into camp in various places twice or three times a year, until by 1917 we were 350 strong and officially recognized as a battalion. The War Office had apparently altered its mind about our distinctive uniform, and ordered us, to our great satisfaction, to adopt the regulation khaki, and also to provide teams

for anti-aircraft work with Hotchkiss guns. But, as soon as we had learnt the mechanism and had had some practice at Purfleet with these weapons, the War Office changed its mind once more, and substituted Lewis guns, so that we had to attend classes for instruction all over again. But by February 1918 we began night duty; first by the search-light in Holland Park, then on the top of Oceanic House in Cockspur Street, and on the Thames bank by Woolwich Arsenal, which we continued until a few days after the Armistice.

I was never on duty myself during an air-raid, though one of our teams was through one in Holland Park. We had orders not to fire unless an enemy plane flew as low as 2,000 feet, which they never did. No bomb was ever dropped near one of our stations; what danger there was came from shrapnel from our own batteries, but though a good deal of this fell, no one in Holland Park was injured. A few days after the Armistice we went on guard at Woolwich for the last time, and a little later our four years of home service became nothing but a memory. A memory, however, that was nothing but pleasant, for we had all lived and worked together on the very best of terms; during the weeks we spent in billets or under canvas there was a general spirit of good fellowship, there were no quarrels and no cliques; many of our men were distinguished in their professions—one of our platoon commanders is now a Lord Justice, another was the Editor of *Punch*, and a third Oswald Barron, 'the Londoner' of the *Evening News*. One of our privates was a Judge, another a K.C., another was raised to the bench shortly after the War; two were distinguished architects, one is now the Bishop of Lincoln, and several, as we found at sing-songs, were musicians and vocalists of remarkable talent. But, except of course on parade, all were equal.

If there had been an invasion we might have been of more use than we actually were; as things were, we served

at least to perform tasks which the War Office considered important, and which, failing volunteers, would have had to be carried out by men of military age.

During the first part of the War I was able—as drills and parades and shooting only occupied certain days in each week—to finish the book I had been writing in Ludlow. It was accepted by Reginald Smith in April 1915, and the original title, *A Queen in Cbeck*, was altered, at his desire, to *In Brief Authority*. In those times of anxiety and suspense literary success or failure seemed unimportant enough, and I was not particularly cast down when I realized, in the following year, that the book had not been a success. On publication I had received £250 in advance of royalties, a sum which was much above the amount which had been actually earned by sales.

It was disappointing, of course, because it showed unmistakably that, even after making all allowances for the circumstances, my work had ceased to attract any considerable number of readers, but at that time nothing mattered but our prospects of winning the War, which seemed to look more remote with each successive month.

The Society of Authors had appointed a War Emergency Committee for the relief of distressed writers, and some of my time was occupied in dealing with applications for relief. Very few of the applicants, by the way, could be called authors, except by some stretch of courtesy, probably because most writers of any standing have relatives in a position to help them.

So I was the more surprised at a Committee meeting one afternoon to find that one of the application forms was in the name of my old friend, Major Kendall—‘Dum-Dum’ of *Punch*. I knew him too well not to be sure that it was simply incredible that he could be in such straits, and I happened to know, too, that he was then in some military capacity in Ireland. The handwriting on the form was not his, and there was a word misspelt into the

bargain. So, as the clerk reported that 'Major Kendall' would call at half-past five that afternoon to hear the result of his application, W. J. Locke, the chairman, Miss May Sinclair, and I decided to return to the office in time to receive him.

He arrived almost to the minute—a short podgy sallow man, with greying hair, heavy eyelids, and a scrubby grey moustache; he wore a neat brown lounge suit, his voice, though soft and thick, was that of a well-educated man, and altogether there was nothing in his appearance that indicated that he was other than a gentleman. If he was disconcerted at finding us there instead of the grant in aid he had called for, he showed no signs of being so, as he explained to us how painful it was to his feelings to be obliged to make such an application. 'Are you the Captain Kendall who has filled up this form?' Locke asked him. 'I am,' he admitted with a noble melancholy. 'And also', continued Locke, "Dum-Dum" of *Punch*?' 'That is so,' he said, 'and I venture to think that that in itself gives me some claim to your assistance.'

Here one of the Committee agreed that that would naturally give him a claim, on which he said, 'Thank you very much,' to which the obvious reply was, 'Not at all.'

'Well, Sir,' said Locke, 'I see you say you are wounded—but surely you are still drawing your pay?' 'Oh, no,' he said, truthfully enough. 'Oh, *dear* no. I am not indeed.'

'As a contributor to *Punch*,' he was next asked, 'couldn't you have applied for help to the Editor or Proprietors?'

'I could have, no doubt,' he replied, 'but—well—you see—I don't know how to explain—but under the circumstances——'

'You felt a delicacy in doing so?' we suggested helpfully. 'Exactly!' he said, charmed by our sympathy, 'I was sure you would understand!' To which we assured



him that we did, perfectly. 'I believe', said another member of the Committee, 'that a comedy of yours has been accepted by the St. James's Theatre?'

This, I think, was news to him, though it was a fact in the case of 'Dum-Dum'. However, he said, 'That is so,' once more with a proud modesty.

'Well, then,' we inquired, 'might not he apply to Sir George Alexander for a further advance on royalties?'

'Well, there again,' he replied, 'it's like this. I don't know whether any of you are acquainted with Sir George?'

We said we were. 'Then', he said, 'you will agree with me that—I don't wish to say anything disparaging—but—well, he is *not* one of *Us*!'

By this time we had had enough of him, and Locke told him he could consider himself lucky if he didn't find himself in prison very shortly, and asked him how he dared come there and represent himself as Captain Kendall and 'Dum-Dum' of *Punch*, who happened to be an old friend of ours.

This might have been expected to bring about his complete collapse, but he didn't move a muscle. All he said was, 'You *amaze* me, gentlemen, you really do! This has completely taken me aback. There *must* be some mistake—you will find me in the Army List, I assure you!'

That might or might not be, we said, but whoever he was he was certainly not Captain Kendall of *Punch*, as he had been representing himself to be.

'I can only say again that I am amazed, gentlemen,' he went on protesting, until Locke said that if he did not leave at once, he would send for a constable and give him in charge. On which he said sadly, 'Well, gentlemen, I can see I'm not very popular here, so I'll wish you good afternoon,' and left, but not before we had warned him against impersonating our friend in future.

Probably he took this advice, for somehow, with all his self-possession, he did not impress me as being a

professional crook, and to apply to a Committee of Authors in the character of one who could not possibly be unknown to them showed more impudence than intelligence.

To return to 1914, London in the first few days after August 3rd had become a changed city; its parks occupied by camps and military lorries, its squares by Territorials at drill, its streets filled by long trains of commandeered vehicles. Many of the theatres closed, and the leading stores and shops were all but empty; no one had any heart for pleasure or shopping, all but the comparatively few who were in uniform seemed in a state of dazed uncertainty as to whether anything in their former tranquil and securely ordered way of life would remain long. The only cheerful note was supplied by bands of urchins who paraded the streets in rank, waving improvised flags, and beating biscuit boxes for drums.

Then came the newspaper slogan of 'Business as Usual', and the public began to feel it their duty to carry on as if there were no war, which most of them did as long as possible.

After Lord Kitchener's appeal there were long queues outside all the recruiting offices and town-halls and volunteer depots, but there were many more who saw no particular necessity for joining them. The weather during all that August, September, and October was gloriously fine, and on Sunday evenings Hyde Park had larger crowds of listeners than ever; the speakers were appealing for recruits, and were of a very different type from the cranks and socialists who formed the counter attraction, but there was much the same air of good-humoured detachment among the audiences.

On one Sunday evening at the end of August I heard two Irish ladies make most eloquent and impassioned speeches from a wagon: the first said that she brought a message from the heroic English dead on French and

Belgian soil; her hearers owed a debt not only to their mothers, wives, and sweethearts, but to those who had died for them. She knew that the young men she saw before her were not heartless or thoughtless; she could see many she would be proud to own as sons. But they lacked imagination. What had happened in Belgium and France might happen in England. By putting off enlisting they were prolonging the War. The second speaker told them that she had one son in the fleet and two at the front, who might then be among the fallen, but if she could call them back she would not. There were mothers whose love was selfish, but in their secret hearts they envied those women whose sons had heard the call, and doubted if the sons they had gone to the very gates of Hell to bring into the world deserved the suffering they had endured for them. At the close there was an appeal to all young men in the gathering to come forward and give their names as recruits.

I heard one stalwart Grenadier guardsman say to another, 'Now you watch. . . . See how many of the blighters come up. . . . Not a blanky one! No pluck among the lot of 'em!'

He was wrong there, of course, as was abundantly proved later on, but on that particular evening I saw no one come forward.

Most of them probably still thought that the War would be over by Christmas, in which case they would not only not be wanted, but, if they enlisted, would have thrown up a good job, and perhaps lost their sweethearts for nothing.

For Lord Kitchener's prediction that the War would last three years at least (if it had been uttered at that date, which I forget) was not generally believed until after it had been fulfilled.

I was at Devizes on September 8th, 1915, when the

first Zeppelin raid over London took place, but I was back in my Duke Street flat during the next raid on October 13th. It was about 9.30 p.m. when I heard a succession of faint dull thuds, and, after switching off my lights and drawing back a window curtain, saw what appeared to be pink stars rising and falling and occasional lightning-like flashes. I went down into Oxford Street, which was crowded with interested spectators, for at that time no one realized any need for taking cover. Fire-engines rushed eastwards, and I was told that the Zepps were over the City. I believe that, to long-sighted eyes, they were plainly visible, gleaming, like so many silver cigars, at an immense height, in the searchlights, but personally I could only see the pink balls of bursting anti-aircraft shells, which, as it proved afterwards, had no effect.

A man I met told me that a bomb had fallen in the Strand and injured several people. As a matter of fact, one bomb had fallen on the Lyceum Theatre and another outside the Gaiety, where there had been some panic for a time; eight persons were reported as having been killed and over thirty injured, which was probably very much below the actual figures.

Another man with whom I got into conversation described an incident in the previous raid when a bomb had fallen just outside a fried-fish shop and killed a man. "E was just comin' outer the door with the paper of fried fish in 'is 'and," said my informant, "when the winder was blown out, and 'is body was stuck full of bits of the glorss. I picked up a bit meself, as a souvenir like, and it's got the I from the letters "Fried Fish" on it still." It struck me as a grisly memento.

One of the lift-boys at Duke Street Mansions had a passion for collecting bits of shrapnel, and would rush into the street and pick them up while an air-raid was proceeding.

Just after midnight on Sunday, October 1st, 1916, I was in my sitting-room, when I heard cheering below,

and, guessing the reason, went to my bow-window, one side of which faced north up Duke Street, Manchester Square. I was just in time to see a pinkish cylinder, with a gout of crimson flame from its right side, sinking perpendicularly at a distance which I guessed to be about fifteen miles away. It descended slowly until it was hidden by the roofs at Mandeville Place, and shortly afterwards there was a vivid white glare. I heard no explosion.

In the street a constable told me it had been brought down at Enfield, but, as a matter of fact, it fell in a field at Potter's Bar within a short distance from my friends, the Edward Wormalds' house, in which they and their grandchildren were at the time. Another Zepp was brought down a mile or so farther away on another occasion, and on a third a hole some twelve feet deep was made by a bomb just outside their grounds, but the house itself was never touched.

On the night of Sunday the 24th of September Zepps dropped bombs on the south of London, and two of these Zepps were destroyed on their way back. The next day I walked from the Elephant and Castle up the Kennington Road to Brixton, and found crowds of other sightseers inspecting the damage.

One house had been reduced to a mere shell, without roof, floors, or windows, and while I stood looking at it a workman remarked solemnly to me, 'That ain't done the 'ouse no good'.

All along the route shop fronts were boarded up and windows shattered, but I think only about a dozen houses were actually wrecked. There must have been some deaths, but I have no record of the figures.

That, unless I am mistaken, was the last time Zepelins came over London, which was left in peace until September 4th, 1917, when it was Gothas which dropped the bombs and did considerable damage in the Savoy and

other places. After that air-raids were pretty frequent, but by that time no one except the police and special constables was to be seen in the streets unless absolutely obliged.

It was interesting, just after the metallic 'plunk' of the maroons had given warning of a coming air-raid, to look down into Oxford Street and note what followed. For a few minutes the stream of promenaders on the pavements would not quicken its pace, if it did not even move more slowly by way of bravado. Then the crowd would grow thinner, and walk much faster; the wheeled traffic would all be hurrying westward; a police-car with 'Take Cover' illuminated on its bonnet would rush hooting towards the City; a few soft thuds like those of tennis balls on racquets would be heard far away to the east, and by that time the street would be empty, except for two or three belated figures on the run.

After that, a hush for twenty minutes or so, while the defence guns sounded nearer, and then for an hour, two, or four hours a series of deafening crashes from the batteries in Hyde Park and its neighbourhood, with occasional lulls, during which one heard the deep drone of the Gothas that seemed immediately overhead.

During one or two of the earlier raids I heard what I believed to be the howls of some wretched dog in the flat below mine, until I realized that it was really the whine of our own shells. I did a certain amount of work while a raid was proceeding, but I am bound to say that my handwriting was apt to be a little shaky on these occasions, and I usually passed the time in playing poker patience.

There was one night on which the maroons rang out and the streets emptied, and then for hour after hour no guns were heard, and yet the 'All Clear' signal was never sounded. It seemed as though it had been a false alarm, and nothing about it appeared in the papers next day. But, little as we knew of it till years later, London had

never been in such peril as it was on that night: a fleet of Gothas, laden with high explosives which might have wrecked a quarter of the Metropolis, was passing overhead, and, owing to the velocity of the wind and the height they were at, were quite unaware that they had reached their objective. Had a single anti-aircraft gun been fired it would have given them their bearings, and innumerable bombs would have fallen in consequence.

As it was, one only was dropped at hazard, and that shattered Swan and Edgar's and part of Piccadilly Circus, with a loss of life that was carefully minimized at the time. Even in quarters which were least attacked air-raids were unpleasant experiences, though only very nervous people indeed were at all terrified by them.

In the theatres the manager would announce that the warning had been given, and the audience would keep their seats, and the company go through the play, without showing the least consciousness of the air-raid.

In a cinema the words 'Enemy aircraft will be overhead in twenty minutes. Those whose homes are at any distance will be wise to leave at once' would be thrown on the screen; one or two people would go out, the rest, rightly concluding that they would be as safe in the picture-theatre as anywhere else, and far better amused, would stay where they were.

I was dining one evening in Berkeley Square with my old friends the Edward Wormalds, when the maroons went off just as the last guest arrived. There were neither butler nor footmen in that house, the waiting being done by maids in a kind of livery, and it was done all through the tremendous bangs and crashes that night with the usual perfection.

It was the East End and the neighbourhood of Holborn which suffered most often and severely from these raids, and it is hardly to be wondered at that, on any nights that were clear enough to make a raid seem likely, tubes and

shelters were crammed with refugees from these dangerous zones. But I was told that there was very little panic, and that chiefly among the poorest class of aliens.

There was always ample warning before a raid, which seldom lasted much longer than two or three hours at most, and could be taken to have been repulsed as soon as the 'All Clear' was sounded—all of which accounted for the fact that, for the vast majority of Londoners, an air-raid was rather annoying than alarming. Considering the immense size of London, too, the chances of a bomb falling on one's own particular roof seemed almost negligible.

But if, as did not seem unlikely in March 1918, a 'Big Bertha' had bombarded us, continuously and without warning, from the Channel ports, or even if a Gotha had wrecked a house in or near my own street, I am afraid I should have felt much more apprehensive than, as things were, I saw any reason for being.

One Sunday morning in July I had gone up to Liverpool Street to join a party for trench digging at Epping. There had been sounds like bombs at 8.30, and I had noticed the pigeons circling in terror round the electric-works pillar in Duke Street, while I had been told at the Bond Street booking-office that an air-raid was going on over the City. At Liverpool Street on the platform, a gigantic disk announced 'Hostile Aircraft. Danger. Take Cover', and I, with others of the party, went down some steps where we found an excited crowd, one of whom gave me a vivid description of the bombs he had seen falling in Leadenhall Street, which he said was in ruins.

Presently, as nothing happened, we came up on the platform again, and, shortly after, 'All Clear' appeared on the disk, and our train started only half an hour late.

When we came back that evening we found that there had been no raid over London at all; the Gothas had attacked the East Coast, but had been driven back at Romford. But the man under the platform that morning



undoubtedly believed he had seen Leadenhall Street bombed, and, unless I am mistaken, there were several others who corroborated him. What the sounds were I heard at Duke Street I never knew—but obviously they were not bombs. Possibly an anti-aircraft battery had fired for practice, but, if so, I remember no other instance of it.

On the evening of Sunday the 30th of September, 1917, I had walked across the park and gardens to dine with my sister in Pembroke Gardens. There was a full moon; there had been a raid the night before, and it was certain that there would be another that evening. In a house in Edwardes Square some one was playing a piano and I stopped to listen. While I was doing so, the whistles blew; a man and a woman passed, and I heard the woman say, with severe disapproval, 'Playing the pianner—and "Take Cover" just called!' In which remark I thought I recognized three distinct ideas: (1) that to play the piano at such a time was sheer bravado, (2) that being so, it was flying in the face of Providence, and (3) that it might give information to the Gothas. Anyway there was an air-raid again that Sunday, and another on the following night.

During those four long years of war such news as came from the front was carefully censored, and the spirits of civilians were chiefly kept up by rumours and predictions—always wrong and often ridiculous. There was the story of the Russian contingent, for instance, which so many had seen passing through England on their way to France; I was told by some one myself that a relation of his had actually beheld Cossacks shaking the snow off their boots on a country railway platform.

Quite early in the War the German troops were reported as being decimated and disheartened, and the civilian population as starving. Every now and then came news that the Kaiser was either mad or dying of some

incurable disease. Every summer experts would assure us that we should win a victorious peace before the next Christmas, and every month there were demonstrations, based on the most infallible calculations, that the enemy had called up his last available forces.

There were monstrously exaggerated stories of atrocities, such as mutilation of Belgian children and so forth. A friend of mine was given a lurid account of a child, both of whose hands had been cut off, which was then at a particular hospital on the south coast. He went there to investigate, and found that there was no such case in that or any other institution. And there were many such stories, all equally circumstantial and uncorroborated.

Then there were the elaborate accounts of the German practice of sending their dead soldiers to factories to be used for some vague commercial purposes, which even some quite intelligent persons at home did not consider at all improbable.

Some months after Lord Kitchener's tragic death I was told that he had escaped and was living on an island in the Hebrides; my informant knew this for a fact, because a cousin of his had had a letter from Lord Kitchener himself to say so!

There was a Parisian seeress, too—I think her name was Mme de Thebes—who periodically predicted crushing victories for the Allies, and was never by any chance right. But her predictions were always reported by correspondents, and gave much encouragement at the time, as her previous utterance was always forgotten before her next appeared.

In February 1916 I was solemnly told the following story, which was just then going the round. An infant, only a few months old, had suddenly spoken from its cradle, and said: 'This War will end in July, but I shall be dead long before that.' On which it brought off part of its prophecy by expiring immediately. I should not be





'Bringing their sheaves with them'  
Original drawing by Anstey Guthrie, 1920

surprised if this story, for which its inventor deserves great credit, did much to cheer the faint-hearted.

No doubt civilians in Germany were sustained by similar methods; they were certainly convinced that their Zeppelins and Gothas had reduced half London to ashes, which must have been a great comfort to them. I remember quite a funny drawing in *Fliegende Blätter* early in the War, representing a Zeppelin sailing over 'Trafalgar Square, and Londoners in various states of ludicrous panic. Probably, as the War went on, subscribers to *Fliegende Blätter* found that air-raids made less appeal to their sense of humour.

I have heard that there were some—and not only civilians at home, but soldiers at the front—who admitted that they 'enjoyed' the War. But I think these were very rare exceptions. To me the War was so incredibly grim and sinister a period that I sometimes caught myself half believing that it must be a terrible dream, from which I should presently wake in relief.

Its shadow overhung everything; in the daytime every other man one met was in khaki; the War news on the contents bills or exhibited in shop fronts was generally more disquieting than reassuring; the lists in the daily Roll of Honour grew longer and longer. At night the darkened streets, where even the theatre and cinema fronts showed nothing but a bluish glimmer, and great searchlights wheeled and flickered above like an ominous aurora borealis, were extraordinarily depressing. A clear starry sky with a brilliant moon merely prepared one for an air-raid.

In summer, the loveliness of the country, for stay-at-homes like myself, was rather saddening than comforting by the contrast with the landscapes which surrounded millions of men less than a hundred miles across the Channel—landscapes whose beauty had changed to limitless desolation and ruin. One could not pass a country-

house without the thought that within its quiet peaceful walls a mother or wife might be sitting stunned by a recent loss, or trying not to think that at any hour she might see coming up the drive the boy or girl from the post office with the telegram from the front that would end all her hopes.

In the villages every window exhibited little cards announcing that father or sons were 'fighting for King and Country'; some windows showed three such cards, In the country post offices the latest bulletins from the front were prominently displayed.

And in places within thirty miles or so from the south or east coasts the faint thud of heavy firing in Belgium could often be heard; indeed, I heard it once on a still August night from a London garden.

In any place or any circumstances it could not have been easy, even for those with the lightest heart or the least imagination, to forget the War for long.

And I was fortunate in one respect at least. I was not—as so many hundreds of thousands were—called upon to mourn the loss of any that were near and dear to me.

Depressing and anxious as those years between August 1914 and November 1918 were, I managed, as did every one else I knew, to continue my ordinary pursuits so far as was possible, and find some distraction in them.

But, except a few short stories (none of which was accepted) and an occasional article for *Punch*, I wrote very little. However, I did not trouble myself much on that account; it did not seem of any importance, even to me, now that all values were changed. The literary impulse might come back whenever the War ended, or it might not, and if not, I had had a fairly good run as it was.

It was seldom that I went to a theatre in those years, but on June 19th, 1915, I was taken by some friends to a memorable performance of *The Passing Show* at the

Palace Theatre, where Miss Elsie Janis and Basil Hallam were appearing for the last time. She was leaving to fulfil an engagement in New York, and he had just joined the Army, and both were given a tumultuous send-off. Basil Hallam, as many will remember, had for two or three years before the War been one of the most popular musical comedy actors; he generally appeared as a 'young man about town', and, with his excellent voice and well-bred boyish manner, was a very pleasant person to see and hear. His songs invariably became the rage, and some of them were being whistled or sung in home-training camps and rest-billets in France throughout the War.

The audience all knew that he was making his last appearance there, and why, and signified their approval by cheering for at least a minute every time he came on. At the end of the piece the curtain rose, amidst the wildest enthusiasm, to discover Miss Janis and Hallam amidst hedges of roses and masses of flowers in gilded baskets. She drew him forward and urged him to make a speech; after some reluctance he said he would recite a poem of hers instead, which he did most impressively. Then, after Miss Janis had said a few words, Basil Hallam addressed us very simply, saying he had had the time of his life that evening, that he 'felt he owed the kindness he had met with to Miss Janis, and in fact to the whole company. And he wished us all good luck'.

After that there were innumerable calls before the curtain, and choruses of 'For he's a jolly good fellow', until he retired amidst the last applause he was ever to hear. For the luck he wished us was not to come to him. He went to France in due time, and was observing from a captive balloon when it was set on fire by a Gotha. His companion's parachute carried him down in safety, but Hallam's failed to open, and he was instantly killed.

It might be said, no doubt, that there was something exaggerated and uncalled for in the enthusiasm of the

audience on his last appearance on the stage, and it is true, of course, that thousands of young men, some of them actors, had obeyed the call without being acclaimed as heroes by any public.

But at that time there were many who still hesitated; it might have been, and I think was, argued by some, that so popular and gifted a comedian as Basil Hallam would be doing more valuable work by remaining to keep up the spirits of the rest than by going to the front.

And I fancy the audience was touched by thoughts of the contrast between the popularity he was leaving, and the life that was before him. Anyway, whether that last triumphant evening was excessive or not, he bore himself modestly throughout it, and I am glad that he should have had it to look back upon.

During the first years of the War I felt little inclined to write, but when in 1917 Arthur Collins once more invited me to collaborate in the Drury Lane pantomime I was glad enough to accept. I was earning little or nothing and the £350 fee was welcome; also to try my hand at a pantomime would be a new and amusing experience.

I am afraid Collins expected that I should invent new and fantastic variations on the story of 'Aladdin', but I felt, and Frank Dix, my collaborator and the author of several previous Drury Lane pantomimes, fully agreed with me, that it was too dramatic as it stood to be improved upon, and we kept strictly to the original outline.

My own contribution was about half of the 'book' and several of the lyrics, which were set by Jimmy Glover and Melville Gideon. My relations with all the members of the company were extremely pleasant and friendly, though I found that one or two of the principals preferred to conduct their scenes on their own lines, which left me free to concentrate on those in which they did not appear.

I had a short encounter with one distinguished actor



after discovering that he was proposing to introduce encore verses of his own to one of my songs, which I had to tell him I could not possibly allow. He sulked for a while but I gained my point, and, as I expected, he was not long in recovering his temper. Then I had bitter complaints from another equally popular comedian that he had nothing to do in a particular scene and that his public would expect him to do a good deal in it. I managed to convince him at last that this simply could not be helped and we remained on excellent terms.

One evening we were having a word rehearsal in the saloon when the maroons went off, and a little later, just as the rehearsal was ending, the anti-aircraft guns began to fire. So the whole company—principals, chorus, and all—adjourned to a corridor outside the stalls, a piano was brought down, and an impromptu concert begun and carried on with great spirit until the 'All Clear' announced, about half-past ten, that the air-raid was over. But after we had left the theatre the Gothas returned and the firing was renewed, though this time only for half an hour or so.

Next morning we heard that ten lives had been lost and seventy persons injured during the raid, damage done in the East End, and a piano factory burnt out in Faringdon Road, while one Gotha had been brought down.

Perhaps it should have been in our minds during that improvised concert of the previous night that bombs must inevitably be dealing death, maiming, and incendiarism in some quarters of London all the while, but I doubt whether any one there gave it much thought. Civilians—at least in those districts which were less often visited—had learnt to accept air-raids as a necessary evil and even to take a sort of pride in sharing an infinitesimal part of the danger that those at the front were facing so continually.

So the majority of Londoners treated an air-raid either

with indifference or bravado—and after all they might have done worse.

To return to the pantomime. On Boxing Night, in spite of the fact that the performance lasted till 11.40, it was a decided success; there were the usual cheers and calls for everybody, including the authors.

But a day or two later that brilliant and versatile actress, Miss Madge Titheradge, who was the Aladdin, and the life and soul of every scene she appeared in, had to leave the cast owing to serious illness, and the pantomime lost its chief attraction.

I forget how long it ran, but I have an impression that its run ended earlier than the average number of performances, which, but for this stroke of ill luck, I think would have been otherwise.

I was in a restaurant one afternoon when two women passed my table; one was heading for the farther end of the room when her friend remarked with a sub-acid sweetness, 'Would you *rather* be too near the band?'

In August 1918 I was asked to write a scenario for a propaganda film for the Ministry of Information, which I did to the best of my ability, but a few days before the Armistice it was returned with an intimation that the Ministry had actually begun work upon it, but had been warned that propaganda productions might stop at any moment. So my patriotic effort never reached the screen, having become unnecessary.

For a year afterwards I occupied myself in making scenarios from several stories of mine, using the technical terms employed at that time. But I never succeeded in placing one of them with any cinema firm, which was just as well, for if I had, it is not likely that the result would have borne any resemblance to the original, cinema directors as a general rule preferring to do a story all over again and do it different.

Four of my stories have been filmed by various com-

panies, however, but not over successfully. *The Brass Bottle* was the first, with the original Vaudeville cast. Unfortunately the producer, having no experience in photography, found that all his first 'shots' came out too pale, and had to film all over again, which ended in his bankruptcy. Which was a pity, for his version was quite good, and of course admirably acted.

Some years later it was filmed again by an American firm. This, too, was fairly good, except the finale. It should have been easy to arrange for the Jinnee to return to his bottle with realistic effect. Instead of which he remarked to Horace Ventimore, 'I see thou hast learnt the great lesson—that riches in themselves do not confer happiness. Farewell,' and walked out of the room.

I had a long correspondence and one interview with a very pleasant and courteous gentleman who was a leading authority on cinema matters, and wished to adapt *Vice Versâ* for the screen. But he assured me that the story as it stood would never do for the cinema; it could only be arranged on a principle of his own. When I asked him what he proposed, he said it was this: the son was to go to his father's office and prove an excellent man of business; the father would return to his son's school and be a boy in mind as well as body.

'But surely,' I protested, 'in that case there would be no exchange of identities at all.' 'Possibly not,' he replied, 'but those are the only conditions on which I could consider the story.' And as I could not accept them, we parted amicably. To this day I have never been able to understand what was in his mind.

*Vice Versâ*, however, did get filmed. Dick, in his father's shape, was made to go to his office on a scooter. His guests at the children's party were a butcher's boy, a baker's boy, and I think a youthful sweep. The film was not a success.

Then the cinema rights in *The Man from Blankley's*

were bought by an American company. A relation who saw the film reported that there was an heiress and a fraudulent trustee, a stolen will, a burglar, a night club, and a boxing-match in it, so the story must have suffered a sea-change into something exceptionally rich and strange. Whether it was appreciated in the States I don't know, but it was very little seen in this country.

Some years later I sold the talking rights to another American cinema film. In this version Lord Strathpeffer arrived at the 'Tidmarshes' in the condition known in the States as 'lit', and hiccuped in his hostess's face with a frequency which the producer must have considered would endear him to the public. There were other improvements on the original: Strathpeffer, after having been kicked down the front-door steps, returned, and he and Marjory finished the evening by supping with the butler and maids in the Servants' Hall.

The film, I believe, had a tremendous success in New York and the States generally, and no doubt gave the American public a far more satisfying insight into the manners and customs of young Scots peers and a London middle-class dinner-party than I could ever have provided.

I did not, nor do I, see any reason to complain of this treatment. It pleased the public for which it was intended, and as my play was in print, it did no harm to my reputation as its author. After all, films are ephemeral affairs, and if this particular version familiarized cinema-goers with my name to any extent, it probably gave them an idea that my work has more 'pep' and 'zip' than is actually the case. Which is all to the good.

To come back to the closing months of the Great War. From the beginning of July it became evident that the tide had turned at last, and that the end was only a matter of months, though expert opinion did not consider the War would be over till the next year, and there were

some who predicted that it would last for two years more. Air-raids over London had ceased; the last was on Whit-Sunday, May 19th. But enemy submarines were busy, and, though we did not know it, we were within six weeks of absolute starvation. As it was, our food was strictly controlled. Every one was supplied with little coupons entitling their holders to so much meat, and guests at such dinner-parties as there were had to bring these coupons with them. Bread was scarce, greyish in colour, and un-nutritious in quality, sugar was only provided at restaurants in papers containing a few minute fragments.

In Surrey that autumn I often found hotel-proprietors declining to supply a meal of any kind whatever. But personally, as I had always eaten but little meat and used saccharine instead of sugar, these regulations affected me very little. Coal was the most serious difficulty, as one was only allowed two hundredweight at intervals and had to interview a series of controllers to obtain that.

But the feeling that peace was within sight would have made far worse hardships endurable.

For a fortnight or so after Armistice Day we still had to continue our anti-aircraft duties. Why, I don't know. But we had only to go down to Woolwich and clean the guns, after which we could return and sleep at home.

1919-1932

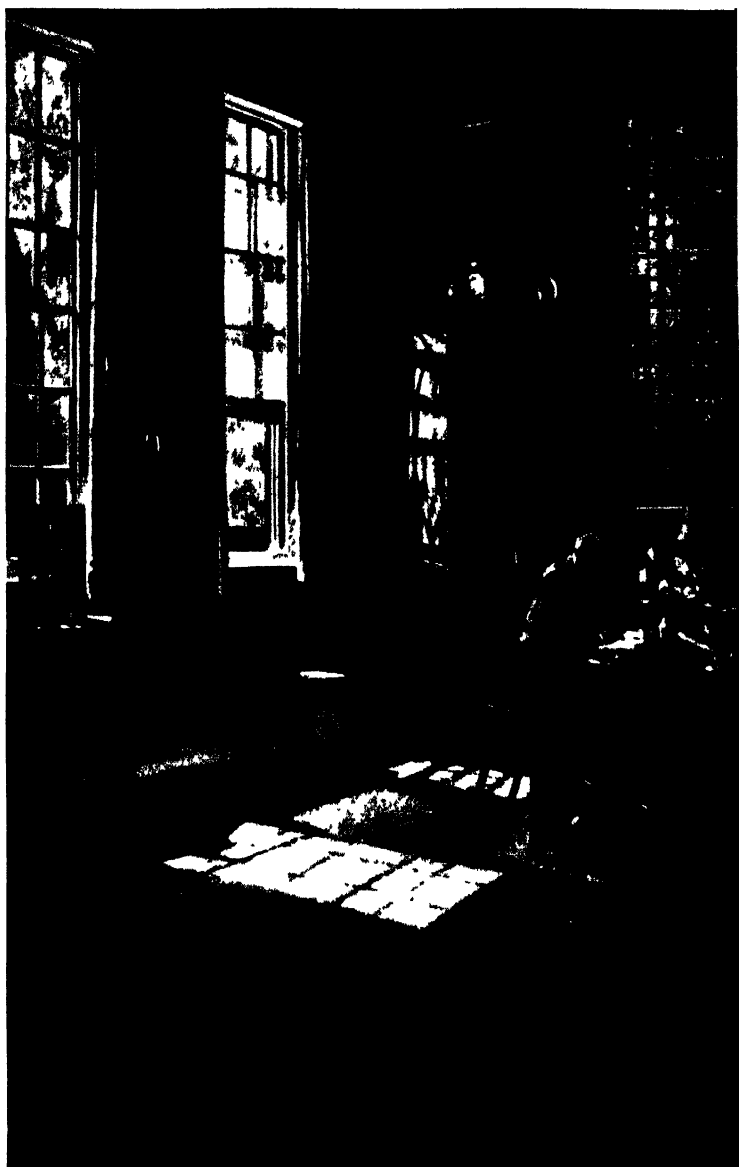
**I**N the autumn of 1919 I left the flat in Duke Street Mansions where I had lived for the previous thirty years, and moved to the house in Holland Park Road where I hope to pass the remainder of my days.

As will have been remarked long since, my life has been singularly deficient in adventure, mainly I imagine because mine is not an adventurous disposition.

There was an occasion, however, in August 1920, when for a moment or two I thought I was in for an adventure of a particularly unpleasant kind.

I had taken rooms in a pleasant old farm-house half-way between Wells and Glastonbury, and was returning from a walk. My road lay along a narrow causeway, raised some feet above the level of the fields and bordered on either side by watercourses. At a bend I found a young woman—rather a nice-looking one unless my memory deceives me—standing with a bicycle. She said she was afraid to go on because there was a bull on the path and he didn't seem very good tempered. And then I saw the bull coming along; he had evidently strayed on to the path by mistake, wanted to get back to his cows but could not see how to manage it; he was snorting and tossing his head in what certainly struck me as a desire to blame somebody else for his foolishness.

But there seemed nothing for it but to go forward and look as unconscious of him as possible. If I had been in a mood for reminiscence, which I was not, I might have recalled an occasion nearly fifty years earlier when my brothers and I, finding a bull with a piece of board fastened to his horns, had seized the opportunity to pelt that board with stones, which puzzled and annoyed the animal con-



Anstey Guthrie at 24 Holland Park Road

From the oil painting by L. Campbell Taylor, R.A., 1928-9





siderably. As we did so from behind a stile this was a fairly safe piece of dare-devilry and would not have rendered us popular in the neighbourhood had we been caught at it.

I felt even less of a dare-devil as this bull came nearer, especially as he had begun to bellow a little, but although he rolled a red and surly eye at me as he passed he did not seem to suspect me or my companion, who was wheeling her bicycle close behind, of being responsible for his misfortune and went his way as harmlessly as one of his own cows. For which I was devoutly thankful, as was the young woman, whom I never met again.

On another of my walks that autumn I was overtaken by a man on a bicycle, who stopped, under the impression, it seemed, that I was a doctor and my car had broken down. After finding that this was not the case he walked with me to the village, where I intended to lunch, and told me his name and a great deal about himself, his family, and his neighbours.

Somehow the subject of benefit societies came up and he mentioned a blacksmith of his acquaintance who long after he was hale and hearty had been drawing eighteen shillings a week sick pay from a London office. One day two strangers arrived at his forge in a trap with a horse that had cast a shoe. He shod the horse and when complimented on his quickness said no one in those parts could beat him at shoeing. 'We can well believe it,' they said. 'And you're looking well with it, too!' 'Yes,' he replied, 'I'm most uncommon well, thank ye.' It is always reputed unlucky to boast of good health, and his boast brought him six months' imprisonment, for the strangers were representatives of the London company, which had been warned (I have since wondered at times whether my companion could not have named the informant) and had sent them down to inquire into the matter.

Benefit societies led my companion (who it appeared

was a tradesman in a prosperous business at the village to which we were going) to the topic of life insurance, and he informed me that he had frequently made handsome profits by insuring friends and relations. 'I had a system, you see, and I'll tell you what it is. I'd know that some one's mother had died of such and such a complaint aged so and so. Well, then I'd wait till the sister was near that age and then insure her and in eighteen months or so I'd get my money. There was a young girl, the daughter of a man I was prenticed to, and she had an invalid sister, and I says to her one day, "Would you have any objection to me taking out a policy on your sister's life?" And she said she shouldn't mind a bit. So I did, and one day I says to her, "Why don't you take out a policy, too? It'll be money if anything happens to her." She said she was afraid of being unable to pay the premiums. I said, "Don't you mind about that. I'll pay them for you and you can pay me back by instalments." So she agreed and I took out another policy for myself. One day I saystoher, "Now if you're worrying about that policy I'll take it off your hands and pay you back all you've paid on it." But she said, "No, I don't think I will. She's not so well again." When the sister died the other said to me, "I was surprised to hear you had two policies," and I said, "My dear girl, it don't matter to you if I had fifty policies. I pay the premiums not you." And she said, "Oh, I only thought I'd mention it."'

He gave me other instances of these little ventures, and though he seemed a kindly and conversational soul it did occur to me that I would rather not live in the same village as he did. I thought I might find his interest in my health just a little depressing.

Of my own personal doings in 1921 I find nothing in my journal of interest to any one but myself. But while at table d'hôte in a Worcestershire hotel, where I was

staying, I heard a clergyman at the next table to me telling his friend how a farmer in his parish had got a record price for beans in 1919, less in 1920, and in 1921, there being no rain for the pods, the whole crop had had to be burnt and the farmer had lost £2,000. Whereupon the elderly head waitress who was attending on them struck in with 'Because God is good, sir.' 'Eh?' said the clergyman, slightly taken aback. 'Yes, sir, during the War the farmers kept back their sons from it and poor people had to send theirs. I lost two of mine. In the old days they and their families used to go to church. Do they go now? No, their wives and daughters stay at home and play the piano or drive about the roads in motor-cars. And now they're being punished for it.'

'I'd go a bit further than that myself,' said the clergyman. 'I've no use for any people that don't come to church. I've told 'em what to do and if they don't do it, that's their look-out and no affair of mine. I only say to 'em, "Don't come to *me* when you're in trouble." But of course they *do*.'

In August and September that year I again went for a cycling tour in France with Dr. M. R. James and A. B. Ramsay, and, shortly after my return, went down to Worcestershire again and stayed for a month in a picturesque old half-timbered farm-house in Little Comberton, near Pershore, cycling all day when the weather permitted and drawing and finishing an article on Labiche for *The London Mercury* when I was indoors.

While lunching in a Malvern hotel I met a youngish ex-soldier who had had a bayonet wound in the side and was still suffering from trench fever. 'But there,' he said, 'it don't matter—it's all for one's country.' 'And a land fit for heroes to live in, eh?' added the landlord sardonically. The other man described how, being very thirsty in the trenches, he had gone over the top and drunk deep

from a flooded shell-hole, at the bottom of which he presently discovered that a corpse was lying. I forget how he came to talk about his experiences, but he told them quite simply and naturally, and so far as I could tell he was not romancing. But he must have been one of the few whom the War had not robbed of all their illusions.

My landlord at Little Comberton had joined and served in Egypt, leaving his wife to carry on the farm until his demobilization, so evidently not all farmers in that part of Worcestershire deserved the head waitress's accusation.

In July 1922 I took rooms in a pleasant farm-house on the hills some three miles above Bakewell, and on one of my cycle-rides I obtained a tribute to my social powers, which, as neither I myself nor any of my friends have rated them at all highly, I still regard as rather gratifying—in its way.

I had cycled over to Buxton and gone into the saloon bar of a little hotel there for luncheon. In a wide bow-window sat a group of half a dozen cronies, a farmer, a horse-dealer, a nautical-looking man, a youngish and rather superior one, and an elderly person with a knowing expression who was addressed as 'Old Jack' and was evidently the wag of the party.

As I sat at a side table near them enjoying my biscuits and pint of shandygaff I could see that 'Old Jack' was arranging with the others to do a little leg-pulling at my expense, and I waited for him to begin.

'How are *you* to-day, sir?' he began with a wink to the others, and I said that I was very well and hoped he was the same. 'You're from Lunnon, aren't you?' he said, 'what they call a Cockney?' I said, 'Born and bred.'

'Ah,' said Old Jack, with another wink at his friends, 'there's a good lot o' people in Lunnon, aren't there?'

'Oh, yes,' I told him innocently. 'Why, when I was in Bond Street the other day, I saw—well, I daresay you

won't believe me, but I saw at least half a dozen people there at the same time.'

That turned the laugh against Old Jack, and after that I drew *him* out and I suppose I must have pulled his leg to the general satisfaction, for when I rose to go they all protested. And then came the tribute, for my farmer friend said he liked my conversation so much that he would pay for my drink if I stayed. However, I explained that a pint was my limit and we parted on the best of terms, 'Old Jack' begging me to call at a certain inn on my way back and mention that I had seen him, which I perfidiously promised I would do.

I left with the proud assurance that my society had been priced at eightpence at the lowest estimate.

For some years after the War I did no literary work whatever except two or three short stories (only one of which found itself accepted) and occasional articles for *Punch*; any dramatic ambition I had ever had was effectually quenched.

Or so I thought till early in 1925, when on re-reading *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* it occurred to me that the chief character might possibly suit Sir Nigel Playfair, and I began a version of the play on the chance.

I did not know until I read it to him that Beerbohm Tree had produced a version by Mr. Somerset Maugham some years before, but Playfair seemed favourably inclined to my own.

It was finished and sent to the Lyric Theatre by the beginning of May, and after that, except a formal acknowledgement of its receipt, I heard nothing of it for ten weeks and concluded that once again I had missed fire.

And then I had a letter from Playfair with an opinion from Arnold Bennett, one of the directors, that my version was 'very good indeed and that it would be difficult

to find fault with it. Whether it would suit the public he did not know, but it would make a most worthy production for the Lyric.' And Playfair suggested doing it in the following October. I learnt later that he had written to the same effect some weeks before July, but the letter must have miscarried somehow, for I never got it.

I had aimed at making *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* a little domestic comedy, omitting all the ballet and musical interludes, but otherwise faithfully following the original and retaining every scene and incident except the little scene with the tailor's assistants which, besides requiring four extra speaking parts with only about four words apiece, would not, I thought, be of any value to an English version.

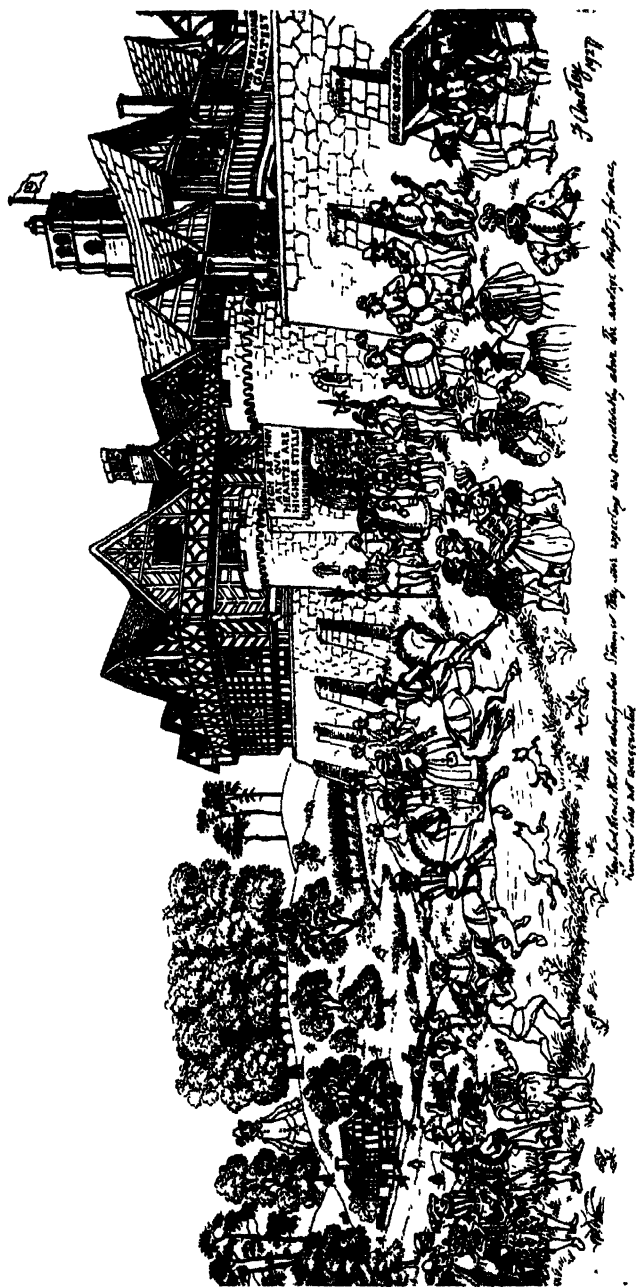
I also took other liberties which seemed to me essential for the success of the piece with any English audience. In the original supper scene Dorante has one very long speech, the other characters only one or two lines each, and even for a stage supper the meal would seem improbably short. I invented business and dialogue for this scene, most of which was founded on Dorante's speech, it is true, but still I would not have allowed myself such freedom if I had seen any way of avoiding it.

Again, I felt that for an English public the play must have a finale, and *Le Bourgeois* is the only one of Molière's comedies which has none. Jourdain is left in ignorance that he has been fooled, elated by his promotion as a Mamamouchi and his daughter's marriage to the Son of the Grand Turk.

I cannot think that this was Molière's intention; it is more probable that he ended the play with Jourdain's discovery that he had been tricked, but that his denouement had to be sacrificed to the exigencies of the ballet.

However this might be, if a French audience is satisfied by enjoying the thought of the disillusion that is left to their imagination, a British audience would certainly not





‘They had heard that the distinguished Stranger they were expecting was considerably above the average height; for once, Rumour has not exaggerated’

Original drawing by Anstey Guthrie, 1927



be. Accordingly I had to provide a short winding-up scene which perhaps was rather more on the lines of Labiche than of Molière. But one might have far worse models than Labiche, who had besides a full share of Molière's genius.

I had called my version *The Bourgeois Gentleman*, but eventually agreed to the substitution of 'Would-be' for 'Bourgeois', a title which I think had been used by one of its translators.

The production was several times postponed and did not actually take place until the 15th of November in the following year.

Meanwhile I had had to alter the construction of the play to some extent to allow for the introduction of vocal and instrumental music and ballets. To this I had, of course, no objection, as musical interludes were a great feature in *Le Bourgeois*. But before and during rehearsals it was found that these interludes rendered the play dangerously long, so it was necessary to make further cuts in the dialogue.

At last the piece was reduced to the required length, and on the first night I think that most people concerned were hopeful of success. The company from Nigel Playfair downwards acted with admirable spirit; the music was excellent, the costumes picturesque and becoming, and the scenery designed by Mr. Norman Wilkinson made a charming and artistic setting for them.

The first Act went briskly and well and there were several 'curtains' after it, as there were after the second Act, in which the supper scene and the ballet were uproariously applauded.

The second scene of the third Act went with a roar throughout, and at the end there was every sign that the audience was pleased; Playfair was called and made a little speech, so were all the members of the company and Mr. Norman Wilkinson and the adapter. But I noticed

afterwards that both Playfair and Lady Playfair evidently had misgivings.

Next morning most of the notices were favourable, though there was a certain condescension in some of them, a treatment of the play as a Christmas charade and a somewhat childish romp.

But other critics were less charitable: I had vulgarized a classic, left out all the best scenes (I had only omitted one which could not, for reasons I have already given, have been included); finally, I had turned refined comedy into pantomime and horseplay. One critic, who was also a distinguished dramatist, while approving of the play complained bitterly of the noxious fumes of tobacco which surrounded his stall. Another advised the management to cut out all my work and restore the original text.

Few plays can long survive comments of this kind and the wonder is that *The Would-be Gentleman* managed to hold on for as many as eighty-four performances. But though the house was generally fairly full and the audiences evidently enjoyed the play, the receipts were not enough to prevent a heavy loss to the management. The stalls were thinly occupied and I was told more than once that 'people won't stand Molière'—why, I confess I find it a little difficult to understand. At all events the usual patrons of the Lyric stayed away in large numbers until they were again attracted to it by *The Beaux' Stratagem*.

After this fiasco I naturally concluded that even as an adapter there was to be no further opening for me.

But in the spring of 1928 I was as surprised as I was pleased to find that my *Would-be Gentleman* was to be given a second chance, this time on the other side of the Atlantic, for Miss Eva Le Gallienne had applied for the right to produce it at her Repertory theatre, the Civic, New York. It seemed that she had come across a copy—it must have been the only one there—in a book-store in that city and found it was exactly the version she wanted.

This was encouraging enough, but she also suggested that I should adapt other Molière comedies, *L'Avare*, *Le Malade Imaginaire*, and *Le Médecin malgré lui*. I began work at once on the second of these, and the enjoyment it gave me soon brought the conviction that I had discovered a congenial and not unworthy occupation for my old age.

*The Would-be Gentleman* was produced at the Civic in October 1928 with so much success that it was included in Miss Le Gallienne's repertoire for a second and third season, and I made two or three hundred pounds by its performances.

*The Imaginary Invalid* was accepted by Miss Lilian Bayliss for the Old Vic, and produced there on the 28th October 1929, with an ideally excellent cast, including Miss Adèle Dixon, Miss Martita Hunt, Miss Margaret Webster, Miss Rosamund Burne, Mr. John Gielgud, Mr. Brember Wills, Mr. Henry Wolston, Mr. Giles Isham, and Mr. Donald Wolfit.

And this time the notices were mostly favourable, though one or two critics found that my dialogue lacked the 'spiritual' quality of the original, and one gently informed me that 'desolated' was not the correct equivalent of *désolé*—a word which, as a matter of fact, does not occur in the original text, if it was current at all in the seventeenth century.

Both these adaptations have been frequently performed by amateurs, and *The Would-be Gentleman* had the honour of being chosen by the Cambridge A.D.C. for their annual week in November 1931.

I should like to be able to add that it gained unanimous approval from the local press, but its approvers were in a very small minority.

The critic of a leading London daily led off with the comment that it was something of a mystery why this somewhat watery version should have been selected by

the A.D.C. The *Cambridge Daily News*, while handsomely conceding that 'Anstey's adaptations of Molière were hardly of the same class as Nahum Tate's *Lear* or Cibber's *Richard III*', pronounced them to be 'not of the happiest'.

It seemed that I 'anglicized the Great Frenchman' with a 'Victorian flavour, a faint reminiscence of the farces in those incredible series of acting plays and a certain heavy school-boyish humour' which somehow made the play 'a piece of gay horse-play'.

Perhaps the shrewdest thrust came from the critic—possibly a highly cultured don or a particularly brilliant undergraduate—of one of the university journals, who stated that 'the idiom, the kind of elaborate facetiousness that is never absent from English translations of Molière, is somehow belaboured by the producers into sounding, in the speedy passages, natural and apposite'.

However, as all the notices gave high praise to the actors and admitted that the performance was successful, these estimates of the adapter did not—though I don't profess to be indifferent to censure—disturb my equanimity very seriously.

Having been born in the year 1856, it would be idle to deny my Victorianism even if I wanted to do so, and after all it is a drawback which is shared by some very eminent authors. I have no overmastering passion for horse-play, nor have I consciously derived either my sense of humour or of the theatre from early Victorian farces. Unless, to be sure, the plays of Labiche come under that category, for I acknowledge my obligations to that most distinguished wearer of Molière's mantle.

In adapting *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* I could not avoid dealing far more freely with the text than was necessary in any subsequent adaptations of mine. In these I took certain liberties here and there, but in all, including the first, my aim has been to present the plays in

the only form that I knew would make them acceptable to the English-speaking public.

The original comedies are long for British requirements; several are in five Acts. It was essential, therefore, to condense them into three and make each play no longer than an English manager would consider suitable.

But I feel sure that any impartial critic who compares my versions with the originals will find that I have omitted nothing essential nor misrepresented the author's meaning in any one scene or line.

Again, some of the comedies are written entirely in rhymed couplets; it would no doubt be possible to render these into English verse, but the result, however skilfully done, would neither be an accurate version nor a good acting play. For this reason among others, the necessity of finding neat and effective rhymes; French verse permits feminine rhymes, i.e. rhymes that to English ears are not rhymes at all. Consequently an adapter, in finding his rhymes, would often have to introduce words and ideas that correspond to nothing in the original text. Even in French Alexandrines the poet is often reduced to obtain his rhymes by making his second line a paraphrase of the first.

At all events comedy dialogue in the metre that used to be employed in pantomimes would be difficult to manage naturally or speak effectively. There is blank verse, of course, but that does not lend itself very readily to comedy purposes.

So from the first I decided that prose was the only possible vehicle. Then came the question of the diction. Some would say that this should have been modelled on that of Molière's English contemporaries, the Restoration dramatists. But theirs, though an admirable vehicle for wit, is less well adapted for broad humour, and the phrasing, though no doubt characteristic of at least a particular set in the last quarter of the seventeenth century,

is curiously unlike any English that has been spoken for at least a hundred and fifty years.

Molière's French, on the contrary, differs very little, if at all, from that of a fairly recent period, say, Labiche's; it is perfectly simple, with remarkably few terms or expressions which a French audience would find difficult to understand.

This being so, I did not see why I should hamper myself and a possible English audience by using an artificial style of dialogue. I decided, rightly as I think, to make mine as modern in its colloquialisms as I could, while avoiding, of course, slang or other expressions that would be glaringly anachronistic.

Most of Molière's types are to be found not only in France but in England; an adapter's business is, in my opinion, to emphasize their universal truth, and he cannot do that if he does not make them sympathetic or understandable to the British playgoer.

My method in adapting a play has always been to make an exact verbatim translation and work on that. If it is in five Acts one has to consider how it can best be reconstructed in three, which scenes would provide the most effective endings for each Act, which can be transposed with advantage, and so forth.

English susceptibilities have to be regarded. French audiences enjoy, or did enjoy, long arguments between two characters on the stage; English audiences are apt to get bored after two or three minutes of sedentary conversation.

In *Le Malade Imaginaire*, for instance, Molière with Béralde as his mouthpiece scarifies his *bête noire*, the fashionable physician, in tremendous tirades. But physicians are not like M. Purgon nowadays, and an English audience would certainly find a wholesale denunciation of them wrongheaded and irritating. So I not only condensed these speeches but toned them down to some extent.

Again Molière's young men in love naturally express themselves in the terms of the day; they talk much of their sighs and flames, of bonds and hearts and altars and links; they occasionally make speeches which in English would sound priggish or affected. If a British audience is to take the least interest in a love affair on the stage an adapter must see to it that his lover never gets a laugh in the wrong place.

I have occasionally given a character who has nothing to say in the original a speaking part in my version, but never without justification in the text. In *Les Femmes Savantes* Chrysale complains that his valet La Rose spends all his time in writing couplets, and I felt this gave me a legitimate excuse for showing him engaged in composition.

In my adaptation of *Le Tartufe* I went farther still. Those who know the original will remember that Orgon makes a deed of gift of all his possessions to the impostor, and also entrusts him with a box containing papers which would compromise both Orgon himself and his friend Argan.

In the original play Orgon's gift of his estate is a sudden idea of his own, and would probably strike an English audience as too incredibly foolish. I endeavoured to make it more plausible by introducing a scene in which Tartufe suggests the notion.

The compromising box and the hold its possession gives Tartufe over his benefactor is only made known to the audience in narration and towards the end of the play. My version showed how Tartufe in the first Act induced Orgon to confide the box to his keeping, and I made this alteration because English playgoers prefer when possible to see a thing happening to being told long afterwards that it happened.

In April 1932 Mr. Neil Porter, greatly daring, produced my version of *Tartufe* for a fortnight's run at the

Sheffield Repertory Theatre. The local critics not only showed a thorough knowledge of the original, which was more than some of their London brethren had done on previous occasions, but actually approved of my treatment of it and their notices were most favourable. For once I escaped any charges of vandalism or Victorian facetiousness.

And whereas I had been dreading that Mr. Porter would have reason to regret his venture, it was the greatest of reliefs to me to hear from him afterwards that it had been both an artistic and a financial success.

But that, I am afraid, marks the close of my career as an adapter of Molière for the English stage.

I had sent Mr. Porter the typescript of *Tartufe* mainly because he had in Christmas 1931 produced my dramatization of *Vice Versâ* and its intended run of a fortnight had been prolonged to three weeks.

That no doubt acted as a sort of introduction, but since then no other manager in London or the provinces has seen any possibilities in *Tartufe* or, for that matter, in any of my as yet unacted versions.

In the first week of May 1926 I was in Ostend on my way to Holland. The General Strike had begun and no one on the Continent or at home was at all sure what would come of it. The French and Belgian editorials and correspondents took the gloomiest views of the situation, being evidently of the opinion that it could only end in revolution and be followed by risings all over Europe. The English-speaking chemist in the Grande Place, with whom I had a talk one afternoon, was on the wireless and gave me an appalling account of the state of England. All industry was paralysed, he told me, no newspapers could be published, no trains were running, no trams or buses, it was doubtful whether London and other cities could be







‘The arrival of the Grand Duke of Ohnebohne-Steingebröchen at Dinkelsburg would have been even more impressive if his ancestral coach had been in a better state of repair’

Original drawing by Anstey Guthrie, 1928

supplied with food. 'I am afraid', he summed up, 'that already you have Revolution.'

I said I did not think there was the least fear of that and gave my reasons, but I left his shop feeling very uncomfortable nevertheless, for I could not help fearing that there was considerable danger of street-fighting and general rioting, and there was something particularly strange and sinister, too, in the idea of an England without railway traffic.

But after table d'hôte that evening, when I was taking a depressing stroll through the dark and windy streets behind the Grande Place, I came upon a small group clustered round the door of a tobacconist's shop evidently listening to a voice from within, so I stopped and listened too.

The voice was English and blandly comfortable, it was announcing by loud speaker: 'Trains from Guildford to-morrow—8.15, 8.45, 9.15, 10.45, and hourly onwards. Trains from Folkestone'—and so on, through a great part of the A.B.C. 'The Savoy Havana Band', the announcer concluded, 'will now play.'

And I walked on assured that the nation was still carrying on, if under difficulties.

I went over to Ypres, which had been entirely rebuilt during the last seven years; the choir and nave of St. Martin's Cathedral were already restored and only the shored-up façade and tower of the Cloth Hall remained in ruin.

And at Passchendaele, Poelkapelle, Dixmude, and over the whole region of battle, devastation, and shell-pits, bright new towns built as far as possible in the style of their predecessors had sprung up. Here and there were a few blackened and distorted trunks which had once been a wood, or a line of brick dug-outs in an embankment, and incredibly vast cemeteries where the dead of our battalions lie. But the general aspect of the country, nevertheless,

bore remarkably few traces of what it had gone through for those four terrible years.

I was shown the immense German gun, 57 feet long, still intact in its concrete pit at Lengenboom near Moere, the gun which bombarded Dunkirk twenty-nine miles off for two years and was so skilfully camouflaged that it was never located. When the German retreat began the gunners attempted to destroy the gun by discharging it against the concrete wall, but it was the concrete, not the gun, that was shattered.

It was strange to hear, by the way, that during a great part of the War all the concrete used by the Germans for gun-pits, pill-boxes, and so forth was obligingly supplied to them by our own country, a fact which if it had been known at the time would not have had an encouraging effect. It was not until an official, I think at the War Office, happened to notice the marked increase in our export of cement to Holland and made some inquiries that the enemy were deprived of all further supply. Which no doubt was considered a very high-handed proceeding by the British patriots, whoever they may have been, whose profits suffered from it.

At the beginning of 1930 I had long resigned myself to the fact that, as a writer, I was all but forgotten, except by a few readers of my own and the succeeding generation. It is true that *Vice Versâ* still appeared in cheap editions, but every other book of mine had either been out of print for years, or had no sales worth mentioning. In 1925 or thereabouts, Messrs. Methuen had published for me *The Last Load*, a small five-shilling volume containing stories and articles that had appeared in various periodicals and were certainly not below my average, some, I had hoped, being among my best work. It was kindly reviewed, but did not find as many as a thousand purchasers.

This being the case, I was more surprised than sanguine when my old friend and colleague, E. V. Lucas, wrote in February proposing a reprint of *The Young Reciter and Model Music-ball*. For although these had had some success when they appeared originally in *Punch*, they had little or none when reprinted in volume form in 1888 and 1890, and I doubted much whether any better result could be expected in 1930, though of course I agreed willingly enough to the experiment.

At the beginning of December in that year, E. V. Lucas told me that his firm wished to publish an omnibus volume containing five or six of my best-known books, a proposal to which I am afraid I gave a rather lukewarm assent.

For one thing, I had little reason to think that such a venture would fare any better than *In Brief Authority* and *The Last Load* had done; for another, if my work was to be reprinted at all, I should much have preferred that it should be in a uniform edition. This, I gathered, was quite out of the question, and so I consented to the omnibus edition, on condition, of course, that Messrs. Murray, to whom three of the books concerned belonged, had no objection.

And when it appeared that they had I was by no means sorry. But before the year ended Messrs. Murray themselves, at the instance of the Book Society, proposed to bring out the omnibus volume, and, as it appeared that a certain sale could be depended on, I had not at all events to fear another failure.

The volume, under the title of *Humour and Fantasy*, was published by Messrs. Murray in July 1931, and nothing could be kinder or more gratifying than its reception by the press.

Several critics not only wrote most appreciatively of the contents of *Humour and Fantasy*, but mentioned other books of mine, which I had thought were long forgotten, as equally deserving of being resuscitated. This was

particularly agreeable, even though I was well aware that no publisher was at all likely to adopt such a suggestion.

Nor could I complain if they did not, seeing that a month or two before Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton had brought out a volume containing four of my adaptations from Molière, which had certainly not repaid them for their enterprise. While, two months later, *The Young Reciter and Model Music-ball* came out with a most generous and charming introduction by my old friend C. L. Graves, and was equally unfortunate, as its sale only reached 290 copies.

It was fairly clear that, whether the younger generation of book-buyers had been induced or not to make the acquaintance of *Humour and Fantasy*, they felt no urgent desire to obtain any other of my performances.

Indeed, even in some of the most appreciative notices of the omnibus book there had been a slightly apologetic tone in the references to the 'faded charm', the 'humour of another age', and so forth.

A Canadian critic put it even more plainly. If, he said, the modern reader would only reconcile himself to my ponderous Victorian humour, and not chafe overmuch at the *naïveté* of my characters, he might find the book not un-amusing, or words to that effect.

Which gave me an idea for my epitaph:

THE PONDEROSITY  
OF  
HIS VICTORIAN HUMOUR  
WAS  
ONLY EXCELLED BY  
THE NAÏVETÉ  
OF  
HIS CHARACTERS.  
READER,  
GO THOU AND DO LIKEWISE!

For if others find one's humour ponderous, it is absurd to protest that they are mistaken.

And, as a matter of fact, I have always recognized that there is something about my particular brand of humour that fails to appeal to more than a few. If it were not so, I should have found readers in the American public, which—except in the case of my first book, which came to them with an inflated reputation—I have never had the good fortune to do.

Some time in 1930 I received a proposal from Mr. Fred Thompson for a musical-comedy version of *The Brass Bottle*. I had had a similar one in 1904 from the late Henry Hamilton, but, not much to my surprise, he found later that he was obliged to give up the idea.

So that, although I gave Mr. Thompson permission to adapt the story, I fully expected that nothing more would come of it, unless the musical version departed very widely from the original.

For my hero was an architect, and an irruption of the inevitable male and female chorus into his sitting-room or office would seem slightly unaccountable even in a musical comedy.

But Mr. Thompson, in collaboration with Mr. Ellis, got over that difficulty by making him a portrait-painter, and I heard later that their version was not only completed but accepted by Mr. Julian Wylie of the Hippodrome Theatre.

Under my agreement with Mr. Wylie I was to receive a third of all authors' royalties, and undertook not to permit any but amateur performances of my own play or dispose of the talking rights in either that or the story in book form during the duration of the agreement, which was four years.

The musical comedy, which was at first entitled *It might have been you!* and afterwards *Out of the Bottle*, and

for which Mr. Wylie had devised most elaborate and mystifying illusions, opened at Glasgow in March 1932, and then went to Edinburgh and cities in the north of England.

But although most of the notices were favourable, I could tell from the weekly returns that it was doing only moderately well, and when it was eventually produced at the Hippodrome it only ran for a couple of months or so.

This was rather unfortunate, as by my agreement with Mr. Wylie I was precluded from making any contract for producing or filming my own novel or play for some years. If *Out of the Bottle* had been a success it would have been produced in America and as a talking film in both countries. Neither of these things happened to it; negotiations began with one cinema company but fell through.

It was rather trying to be obliged to decline offers for my own play from more than one cinema firm about this time, but I consoled myself by reflecting that they would probably have come to nothing.

Since then Sir Nigel Playfair suggested to me that he and his son should appear in a screen version of *Vice Versâ*, to which I gladly consented. An American producer would, I feel sure, find it necessary to make Crichton House a 'co-ed' school with a liberal provision of baseball and 'necking' to attract his public, but I knew that in Sir Nigel's hands the story would be as artistically and humorously rendered as I could possibly desire.

But so far, although several English firms have considered the proposal, they have all withdrawn for one reason or another. Some, I think, distrust subjects that have to do with magic of any sort, while directors who undertake a story prefer to do so with their own cast and on their own lines, which are usually in a direction as far away from the original as human ingenuity can devise.



So I do not expect to see *Vice Versâ* as a talking film before I depart hence.

A French author—whether it was Balzac, Flaubert, Daudet, or some other I quite forget—said that there were three periods in the career of a writer: the first, when the critics praise him because he is unknown; the second, when they attack him because he is popular; the third, when they praise him once more because he no longer counts.

As a rule I have met with little but generosity from critics throughout my literary life. Some, it is true, did me considerable harm by treating my second book as a deliberate plagiarism, forgetting that, if it was closely on the lines of another's work (and to this day I don't know whether it was or not), such similarity was the clearest proof in its favour. For no one who could write at all would be such a crass fool as to betray his obligations with such naïvety as that. Still, with a very few exceptions, I have always had an extremely good 'press', and indeed have been far more a critics' author than a popular one.

As I have said elsewhere, my Public for all my books after my first has never been large—at the best I could count upon five or six thousand purchasers, and perhaps for a cheaper edition four or five thousand more.

During and since the Warno book of mine has paid the expense of publication, and nearly everything I have written has been out of print for many years.

I can see many reasons that account for this. I allowed too much time to pass between my various books, and when one appeared it was found to be in a totally different vein from that of the last. A mistake, because the Public naturally like to know that the article they are buying bears the same brand.

Another mistake—though I don't in the least regret it

—was that from the outset I declined, and have always declined, to be interviewed, not in the least on any lofty or austere principle, but because I did not happen to have much confidence in interviewing as it was conducted in those days.

It was much rarer then than it has since become, and I think was limited to two or three Society journals, whose representatives seemed to me to have only two methods—one being to treat their subject and his surroundings with fulsome and detailed description, the other to show their own cleverness by a subtly malicious drawing out of their unconscious victim. In both cases he would find himself faintly ridiculous, and be fortunate if he were not presented with sentiments and opinions that he had neither expressed nor held.

And as I had no opinions worth expressing, either about literature or its representatives, and only wanted to be allowed to go on writing in peace, I excused myself, and having done so once, could not afterwards make an exception without giving offence.

I am quite aware that the modern interviewer performs his office with all possible tact and delicacy, but on the rare occasions on which I have been approached of late I have gone on declining, partly because it strikes me as not a little absurd to be described to readers who are very unlikely to have read me, but chiefly from mere force of habit.

However, it is a considerable time now since I last had to excuse myself, and it is most unlikely that I shall be under the necessity of doing so again. For, so far as the present generation of readers is concerned, I no longer count as an author either of humorous or serious work.

I know that, in my time, I amused and interested a considerable number of people, and even now I am occasionally touched and gratified by letters from unknown correspondents, some of whom were even born in this century.

It is true, however, that few of these seem to be acquainted with any book of mine later than my first.

One day in 1932 my housekeeper reported that an effusive Irish gentleman had called and expressed his ardent desire to make the acquaintance of an author whose work he admired beyond all others. I was out—or she said I was out—and he went away unsatisfied.

Later I had a long and enthusiastic letter from him; it would be the crowning joy and pride of his life to meet the author of *Vice Versâ*, which he regarded as by far the greatest book that ever was written. (Here I wondered whether he had ever been to Blarney Castle.) More than this, he went on, it miraculously predicted, years before he was born, every single incident in his own school life, which he was anxious to relate to me, as he had suffered abominably and he was sure I should be interested in his experiences. (I was not so sure.) He had an aunt Eliza who, after reading the book, had expressed her conviction that I had been terribly unhappy at school. (But his Aunt Eliza was wrong about that.) Then followed the most tremendous praises of the genius, the insight, the masterly powers of description, and I don't know what else that he found in that work. And lastly came the climax. 'But here', he said in effect, 'eulogy must cease, and I have to tell you frankly, Sir, that everything you have written since has been simply waste paper.' (I think he underlined this.) 'Like ——— and like ———' (here he mentioned two authors, who did not happen to be one-book men by any means), 'you spilt all your genius in your first book.'

He might be right, I thought, but if all my genius was spilt, I saw no object in crying over it in his company, so I left his letter unanswered, hoping that, in the good old editorial phrase, he would interpret my silence as 'a polite negative'.

He did nothing of the kind; a fortnight later brought

another letter, even more laudatory. He had divided every chapter of *Vice Versâ* into numbered verses, like Holy Scripture, and was very anxious to show me his performance. He would be in London shortly, and would I make an appointment to see him? And would I like him to make a concordance on Cruden's system, and an index to my great work?

After that, I found it advisable to tell him that, as I had no fondness for discussing my own work, I could not think a personal interview would be of any benefit to either of us, while I intimated that, with a little more sense of proportion, he might see that the division into verses, the Concordance, and so forth was an absurdly inappropriate labour.

I did not expect an answer to that, but I had one. He replied that he saw my point; he knew I liked frankness, and he could not retract a word of what he had said about my later work (which I had not asked him to do). At least he would make one exception, and that was my preface to *Humour and Fantasy*, which had all the sparkle and point, &c., &c., of my first book.

So I seem to have saved something out of the wreckage, and what is more, I think I have averted all danger of a Concordance to *Vice Versâ*.

But his was an original method of complimenting an author.

I have found in these last years a quite unremunerative occupation which absorbs a great deal of my time. I had always been fond of drawing, though my original efforts were from lack of training quite amateurish, but I discovered that I could make quite accurate pen-and-ink copies of Dürer woodcuts, which were so many delightful voyages of discovery.

Later I copied other woodcuts and engravings of the same period in waterproof indian ink and tinted them in

water-colour. This led to making pencil outlines of colour reproductions of Old Masters, and attempting to copy the modelling and values in water-colour, of which when I began I had no knowledge whatever.

But, with practice, I gradually learnt how to combine and lay on colours and get results which were not absolute libels of the originals, while by careful measurements the drawing at least was accurate.

In the last ten years or so I have copied most of the Medici and Seeman colour-reproductions, Vermeer, de Hooch, Maes, Vandyck, Memling, Brueghel, Titian, Chardin, Romney, Reynolds, and so forth. At times I still fail to seize the exact expression or the precise tone, but as a rule I do succeed in producing something which, without too close an examination, might be mistaken for the colour-reproduction from which it was copied.

I need hardly say that such copies have neither commercial nor artistic value; they are at best copies of copies, and making them, though it has somewhat improved my drawing, has not taught me to paint from nature.

Still it has been a great resource and pleasure to me, and, as there are a few friends of mine who, I am glad to think, really care to have these performances, I like to believe that the time I spend on them is not entirely wasted.

Occasionally I do original pen-and-ink drawings, which are too laboured and faulty in technique to be other than amateurish, and have nothing to recommend them but a certain quality of humour. But they occupy me very pleasantly, and are a means of self-expression, which is quite enough to justify any hobby.

## XVI

### *My Dogs*

**M**y first dog was a Yorkshire terrier of somewhat doubtful descent—but a handsome little animal with a golden head and paws and a silver-blue coat.

I bought him in the summer of 1889 in Leadenhall Market, where I saw him being led about on a lead by a person who said—untruthfully, as I realized at the time—that he had to dispose of him as he was leaving for America shortly.

He was just the kind of dog I had in my mind, so I acquired him for, I think, thirty shillings and walked back with him to my new flat in Duke Street Mansions. During that walk he rather disquieted me by stopping occasionally before any house that looked at all important with an air of having suddenly recollected that that was where he belonged. Of course he might merely have done this to impress me, but it occurred to me for the first time that the seedy person had probably stolen him. But he recognized so many homes in his progress that I concluded that he was merely trying to impress me—not to mention that he was hardly of the value to tempt a dog-stealer.

Still for some time afterwards I never took him out without an uneasy feeling that he might at any moment rush into the arms of a long lost master or mistress. Fortunately for me this was never to happen.

I named him 'Bran', which was more suggestive of a Viking or a mastiff than a not very large terrier, but he answered to it notwithstanding.

For the first day or so he evidently reserved his opinion of me until one afternoon when he decided, as I was sitting on a chair in Kensington Gardens, that I

suited him, and sprang on my knee and covered me with kisses.

And from that moment he never altered in his devotion and was never really content or happy unless he was with me. There were painful scenes whenever I went to the country or abroad and was obliged to leave him at home, for he always knew what was coming and would get into a portmanteau to make sure of being taken, or just as I was starting for my station I would find that he had followed me downstairs and jumped into the hansom. But he always accompanied me when it was at all possible. One day early in our companionship I took him on the river with me, but it was the first and last time, for, not being used to boats, he was so excited that he barked unceasingly for the entire afternoon, and once barked himself overboard in his enthusiasm and I had to fish him out, after which his barks became if anything more vociferous. So at last, as he was making me more conspicuous than I liked, I sculled him back to the landing-stage with a sense that he was no dog for a water-party.

Bran, I think, was a town dog and had never been in the country until I brought him down to rooms I had taken in Slindon. I suppose he must have had some vague hereditary sporting instinct in him, for as I passed a farm on the first of our walks I looked round and was horrified to see Bran coming proudly up with a fine gosling in his mouth. I took it from him; perhaps one of his ancestors had had a soft mouth, for fortunately the gosling was none the worse.

But I foresaw that if this habit were not checked at once my rural walks would not be lacking in unpleasant interviews and I corrected Bran severely. It made no lasting impression on him, for in a field farther on he came upon a hen and chickens and went off after them joyously.

The next moment the hen was off after *him* and chased

him round two-thirds of the field before he could get back to me—a changed dog.

Never again had I to correct him for such indiscretions; he had learned that there are two sides to the pleasures of the chase. Ever after that he came cautiously to heel at the approach of the least aggressive poultry—he was taking no more risks.

For four years Bran was my constant companion and the longest tramps never seemed to tire him. Then one hot spring morning at Tunbridge Wells we were starting for a walk and I saw him plunge into a pond and appear to be enjoying his swim immensely until as I came nearer I found that he was actually in some kind of fit. I waded in up to my knees and got him out a mask of mud, and for a time as he lay on the bank I thought he was gone. He came to eventually and I carried him to the nearest vet, who said that he would be none the worse for the attack except that he would no longer be equal to long walks. So after that I took my tramps alone—to be met with a forgivingly effusive welcome when I returned.

I suppose he must have been about six years old at the time, and for a year or two longer he was as lively and apparently healthy as before. Then he gradually declined until in 1897 he was too ill to be taken away from town, and I had a letter later from my brother Leonard telling me to my great grief, though I had had little hope before, that it had been necessary to put him painlessly to sleep.

And so I lost Bran, the best-tempered and most affectionate little dog I have ever possessed. The only creature for whom he cherished an undying hatred was my brothers' terrier Charlie, who returned it with interest, for whenever I went to my brothers' house with Bran, he and Charlie began insulting one another before the front door was opened.

Charlie died first and was buried in the Dogs' Cemetery



in Hyde Park, and when Bran died my brothers kindly arranged for his burial in the same grave as Charlie's, with his name inscribed below. No doubt Death would have reconciled them if the opportunity had been given, but their bones were never to mix. It was not until 1909 that I discovered that Bran had been interred by mistake with another and quite unknown Charlie, an arrangement which he would probably have preferred.

In the days when Bran was young and vigorous I once played a distinctly unkind trick on him. I had returned from a Christmas party somewhere with a present in the form of a large plaster of Paris bulldog in a grey top-hat. The hat had no crown, and inside the dog, which had green glass eyes, a candle was suspended.

I placed the dog in a conspicuous corner, lit the candle and called in Bran. At first he was spellbound with indignant horror. This hideous intruder had evidently supplanted him in his master's affections, and the thing actually had the additional presumption to wear a top-hat, which was not to be tolerated, particularly as on a closer investigation it all but scorched his nose.

So Bran sprang at it, glass eyes, top-hat, candle, and all—and soon after that, if I had ever thought of using that bulldog as an ornament—which I had not—it would have been too late to do so.

There was a stuffed rabbit, too, among my nephew's toys, which had a concealed squeak inside it and always became vocal just after Bran was positive that he really had shaken the life out of it this time. This he evidently considered was not playing the game and it both annoyed and puzzled him.

And I remember his dismay and confusion when for the first time he encountered a monkey. It was attached to an organ by a long cord and met him on the pavement. Bran bolted from it in a panic; no doubt it completely satisfied him as to the existence of a personal Devil. But

even if it had been one he was unnecessarily alarmed by it, for he was too good a little dog to be in any danger.

After Bran's death it was two years before I could bring myself to have another dog, and when I did he was a pup and I bought him without having seen him, which was a mistake. Some friends knew of a breeder of pedigree Black Skyes and showed me attractive photographs of one of them, so I ordered a pup from a forthcoming litter, and in due time 'Bogie', a name he had received at the kennels, arrived in a hamper.

One does not expect even a pedigree pup to be a thing of beauty at the age of two months, but after making all allowances I was a little disappointed with Bogie. He was extremely sensitive about the ribs and showed it by growling whenever any attempt was made to handle or lift him, and he had none of the charming foolishness of ordinary puppies. It is true that he developed into a fairly handsome specimen of his breed, and for his first year or two occasionally was almost playful, but as he grew older he became more and more unsociable and disgruntled, at least with me. I took him with me to a little farm in Bucks. but he seldom favoured me with his company, generally deserting me early in our walks and stealing off to the cottage of a village woman whose society he so greatly preferred to mine that he had to be brought back more or less under protest at the close of every day. This was not likely to endear him to me and it did not. But he was not actually hostile, merely indifferent, and we were on terms of mutual toleration, though he had one impish trick which I found very hard to bear. He was not in the least afraid of me and would, when I was alone, stroll in to pass the time of day and stroll back to the kitchen. But when I had friends with me and, as they wished to see him, he was sent in to my sitting-room, he would crawl in with an affectation of abject terror as

though in humble entreaty that I would not beat him too severely this time.

Which, of course, produced an impression that was far from the truth, for I never beat him at all. To do Bogie justice he never did anything to deserve correction. Still, in spite of his good looks I had little if any pleasure from him, and even his good looks did not remain long. For while my flat in Duke Street was being redecorated he was sent down to his cottager friend in the country to avoid danger from the paint, and there he distinguished himself by becoming the only case of distemper in the village. He returned restored to health but minus one of his eyes, which gave him a sinister appearance.

My housekeeper, of course, adored him as much as ever and it would have been difficult for me to like him less. I could not, even if I had wished, have induced any one to find a new home for him, so he stayed on for years and years after that, one-eyed but in excellent health and vigour and, for me at least, no companion at all. I used to quote Calverley's lines, 'He'd look inimitable stuffed, And knows it—but he will not die!'

Bogie died eventually at the good old age of fourteen and I cannot pretend that I felt anything but relief, for our relations from the first had never been those of dog and master.

I could never get on without a dog of some sort for long, and when I decided to have another I went to the Dogs' Home at Battersea, where I found Jock. He was an unabashed mongrel, with a sandy coat and a feathery tail. I liked him at once for the gallant way he kept it up among a crowd of pathetic little cravens, and he became mine for the very moderate sum of thirteen shillings. I took him home on a lead through the Green Park, where he sat on a seat beside me and expressed his approval of his new master. Jock was about eighteen months old and for a

time not in the best of health. I had to leave him at a vet's for weeks—but he soon grew robust and vigorous. He was a remarkably independent dog, and though he liked coming out with me he would suddenly decide that he had had enough of it and go home. The first time this happened was in Kensington Gardens and I thought he was lost and gave information at the Police Station. The way home was across the Gardens and Hyde Park through the traffic—considerable even in 1912—at the Marble Arch and across North Audley Street to Duke Street, Grosvenor Square, but when I got back to my flat Jock was calmly waiting for me, not in the least apologetic.

So when I missed him on later occasions, as I frequently did, I never troubled the Police again. Jock had more coolness and judgement in traffic than any dog I have ever known—motor-buses, cars, and taxis were not as numerous as they are now, but still there were a good many of them and he was perfectly safe among them without a lead.

I always took him to the country with me before the War and he took very kindly to country life; his first proceeding after arrival was to go round the village or town and take on any other dog that showed fight. For some reason Jock seemed to have a peculiarly irritating effect on strange dogs; then he would return to me a trifle battered but having evidently had a most enjoyable day.

He was with me at Ludlow in the summer of 1914 and I wrote the greater part of *In Brief Authority* there with Jock on the table by me. But every now and then he would feel a desire for more stimulating society and go off to spend a morning or afternoon with people to whom he had introduced himself.

I was not jealous, for I knew very well that in spite of these aberrations I ranked first in his affections.

Then came four years of War and with them air-raids. Jock seemed to know during a raid that danger was over-

head and was so overcome with panic that he was beyond barking and sat trembling on my housekeeper's lap with his head wrapped up until the 'All Clear' was sounded, when he became himself again.

But he was strong and active as ever when the War ended and I moved to my present house in Holland Park Road, where he soon established himself as a favourite with my neighbours.

In time, however, age began to tell on him and in 1922, when I returned from the country, having been obliged to leave him at home, he welcomed me much as usual but as he followed me into my bedroom I was shocked to see from the way he blundered against the furniture that he had become almost blind. He was obviously very ill in other respects, and the next day, which happened to be my birthday, I took him in a taxi to Mr. Batt's in Oxford Street with a sad foreknowledge that nothing could be done. Poor Jock thought he was once more going into the country with me and nestled against me in the cab and licked my hand with a pathetically feeble attempt at his old delight in such excursions. But I knew it was our very last ride together; Mr. Batt's verdict was that the most merciful course was to end Jock's sufferings by painless extinction, so I said good-bye to him for the last time and on my way back arranged for his burial in the Dogs' Cemetery, where he now lies. I have spent happier birth-days than that 8th of August 1922.

It was some months before I replaced Jock, and having seen a most engaging Cairn (which was shortly afterwards stolen and never recovered) at a friend's house I had decided that my next dog should be of that breed.

So having seen an advertisement in one of the dog papers I went down to Kent, lunched with a young married couple, who were adding to their not, I fancy, very large income by breeding Cairn terriers, and

acquired a pedigree pup of two months old whom I called Garry.

Garry did not at all appreciate being torn from the bosom of his family, and when on my way back to the station I took him off the lead to see what he would do, he at once floundered back to rejoin his brothers and sisters.

However, he resigned himself to necessity, and in the railway carriage crawled up to the back of my coat collar, where he slept for the rest of the journey.

On his arrival at my house he instantly, though he was little larger than a rat, clambered up my rather steep staircase on a voyage of discovery. But after being put to bed in his basket, homesickness overcame him and he lamented his mother and brethren by yelping incessantly like a tree frog throughout the night. Fortunately they were soon forgotten and he became reconciled to his new home.

During the next few months Garry became perfectly house-trained and a very fine specimen of a well-bred Cairn; his coat was brindled grey and his head was handsome and intelligent. He was fairly docile though I only succeeded in teaching him one trick. I have an old English Empire chair which has no elbow-rests, but its front legs are prolonged and terminating in carved lions' heads as supports for a sitter's hands. At the word of command he would jump on this chair and place his forepaws on one of the lion's heads, looking extremely proud of the feat. When visitors were present I had merely to say to him, 'Suppose you did that little trick of yours?' and he would trot off and do it. Then I would say without any emphasis whatever, 'Well, you might repeat that performance' or 'You can give us a repetition of that'—or any phrase I chose to the same effect, and Garry at once acted on the suggestion. He gave the impression of understanding every word I said, but of

course he did nothing of the kind, but was merely eager to show off his single accomplishment.

He was friendly and popular with all the other residents in our little court, though when one of them acquired a Sealyham of about his own age I feared there might be trouble. Luckily the pair fraternized at first sight and became a canine David and Jonathan couple. I have a snapshot of them in which Garry had evidently asked the Sealyham if 'he had heard *this* one?' which the Sealyham apparently hadn't, for he is grinning from ear to ear. Probably not the sort of story for occasions when Mrs. Boffin was present—a dog's taste in humour being almost certainly on the broad side.

For three or four years Garry was all I could wish. And then almost imperceptibly he began to show an irritable temper. When this happened with me I at first corrected him sharply, but this only made him more savage, and at last I found that the only effective method was to ignore him altogether. This Garry could not endure and after a few hours he would come and humbly plead to be forgiven, after which our relations became cordial again.

But he grew more and more temperamental; few dogs enjoy being washed, but he had submitted to this for several years without protest until one day he made up his mind that he would be washed no more, and flew into such frantic rages whenever any attempt was made to bath him that he gained his point.

Then I saw in a dog-shop that was being run by some ladies in Knightsbridge a notice that they washed dogs, so I took the unsuspecting Garry there and left him, after warning the assistants that he was bad-tempered, to undergo a very necessary cleansing. I returned in an hour—to find him on a slab hysterical with fury. One of the assistants had an arm bound up, another was nursing her wrist. Garry had bitten them both and I think

a boy helper, and was still but half washed. I went up to soothe him and he promptly bit my hand—fortunately, as I had a glove on, without much damage. And after that I took him away in disgrace but quite unrepentant; the poor ladies absolutely declined to undertake his toilet again.

Then I took him to Mr. Batt's and this time he got washed very thoroughly, though the man who achieved this victory told me afterwards that Garry was 'the hottest little member he had ever had to do with'—which I had no difficulty in believing.

It was a nuisance and an expense to have to take one's dog to a vet's whenever he required a bath, but there was no other way of keeping him clean and oneself unbitten, and I put up with it. For in his better moments Garry was a most engaging dog and I still hoped that he would grow out of these fits of ill temper.

On the contrary they grew worse; I think he must have worked himself up into rages for the sense of importance they gave him, for he began to resent the least interference—even being harnessed for a walk made him frantic. It occurred to me that there might be some physical reason for it, so I got Mr. Batt to examine him. But no—he was found to be in perfect health, there was nothing to account for his behaviour but temperament, Mr. Batt said, and if he was his dog, he wouldn't keep him another day. But I did keep Garry for some time after that. And then one hot Sunday morning, when for once he had come out for a walk without making a scene, I missed him in Kensington Gardens and, as he failed to appear, gave information at the Hyde Park police station. That afternoon to my great relief a constable brought word that he was at the station, and my housekeeper, who adored him, went joyfully off to bring him home. What had happened to him we never knew; possibly he had flown at a policeman and been hit



in self-defence; quite as possibly it was fear and excitement, but he would not let her come near him; he had to be left there that night and brought home the next day possessed of several more devils than he had been before.

By this time I realized that though he was certainly not mad he was almost as dangerous. I knew what Mr. Batt would advise, but as I wanted to give poor Garry every chance I left him with a vet in Kensington, with a faint hope that he might yet be saved. But of course Mr. Batt had been right and the Kensington firm advised, as he would have done, that painless extinction was the only possible course.

So Garry, still in his prime, was put to sleep and I buried him myself in my sister's garden, with much regret for the dog he might have been but, from some mysterious kink in his constitution—for he was certainly not spoilt by over-indulgence of any kind—had failed to be.

I allowed a decent interval of doglessness before I thought of replacing Garry. I wanted another pedigree dog and preferably a Cairn, but decided that this time I would have a full-grown one and keep him on approval for a while before actually buying him. So I arranged with one of the ladies who then ran the Knightsbridge kennels to take Solomon on these terms.

He was brindled grey like Garry but of rather heavier build; he had no vices but, as I soon found, was quite the dullest and most hopelessly uninteresting dog that I ever came across. He accepted his new surroundings stolidly enough but showed no sign of attachment to me or anybody else. People say that you have only to give a new dog food from your own hands to secure his loyalty and affection, but Solomon accepted food from me several times without modifying his air of detached indifference. I took him out every morning and he plodded soberly by

my side with a depressing absence of enjoyment, he seemed to take no pleasure even in the society of other dogs, to say nothing of mine—all spirit of fellowship and *joie de vivre* had been left out of the animal—he was not a dog but an incubus. So after a short experience of Solomon as a walking wet-blanket I returned him, or rather exchanged him, this time, as I seemed to have no luck with Cairns, for an extremely charming little white West Highland terrier whose name was also scriptural, being Saul.

I tried hard for five weeks to gain Saul's affection, for he was a graceful and beautiful little dog, and I would gladly have decided on keeping him from the moment he made the slightest advance. But this he never did; he showed a decided liking for my housekeeper, but none whatever for me, and on our daily walks together he ignored my existence as far as was possible.

And at last, as it is too humiliating to be cut by one's own dog, Saul followed Solomon back to the Knights-bridge kennels. I heard later that he had been acquired by a married couple and promptly returned because he obstinately declined to recognize the husband. Saul, it seemed, only cared for women's society and was a confirmed misanthrope, which rather consoled me for my failure to thaw his heart.

When I next visited the kennels I found Saul again for sale, and whether his conscience suddenly stirred or whether it had occurred to him that he might go farther and find a worse master than me I don't know, but he surprised me by not only recognizing me but actually jumping on my lap and licking my hand. But it was too late; I had by now returned to my original idea of training a pup and was there to choose one from several who had been sent up that day in a crate for my inspection. I wanted no more full-grown dogs full of memories of happier days.

The pups were all Cairns and I had said that I should prefer a brindled grey, which two of them were. But there was a third which had so much the most intelligent face and so obviously insisted on my taking him that I did so at once although his coat was a pale biscuit shade.

His name I was told was 'Jimmie', which as I did not think it suited him I changed at once to 'Mac', and as he was only four months old it made no difference to him.

I took him across the Park and Gardens; he was not very strong on his legs and I had to carry him a good part of the way to Church Street, where I had him vetted. The doctor who examined him said he was quite healthy but that his front teeth were irregular, which I had already noticed, and that he rather thought he might develop rickets, in which opinion I did not agree. Anyway I decided that Mac would turn out to be the right sort of dog for me and bought him.

He soon became both house-trained and street-trained and in a year he was nearly full grown and, in spite of his somewhat unsatisfactory teeth, a beautiful little dog with exceptionally brilliant eyes and dark-brown ears. He was docile and good-tempered and excellent company on our morning walks. Then, when out for an airing with my housekeeper, he picked up some tainted refuse or other he had found in a heap of dead leaves and ate it before he could be stopped. And shortly after that it was clear that the stuff, whatever it was, had affected his health. He was sent to the Kensington vet, whose rather cryptic report was that he was 'worse than we thought'. I went every day to the Dogs' Surgery, always to be told that his temperature was still high and never without fear that I might be told he was dead. When he was a little better I went up to his cubicle on the first floor and he greeted me with enthusiasm, evidently thinking I had come to take him away. And the last I saw of him as I went down the

stairs was his bright eyes and pricked ears at the wire lattice. But I had to give up paying him visits as I was told that he fretted dangerously after them.

So in a masochistic mood I would go alone along our former routes in Kensington Gardens imagining what Kipling in one of his most poignant dog-poems terms 'the sound Of Four-Foot trotting behind'.

Happily for me, though at long last, the time came when that sound was no longer imaginary, and when on reaching Church Street without any sanguine expectation that the lead and harness I brought would really be required I found that Mac was well enough to leave. So we went once more together into Kensington Gardens and there is a seat by one of the entrances which I never pass without remembering how we celebrated our reunion on it.

But for some time after I had fears that his recovery might only be apparent, for he had one or two relapses. However, he did recover, and has ever since been in excellent health and spirits.

Mac, despite his pedigree, would probably never, owing to the slight malformation of his teeth, gain a prize at any show, and yet there is a charm about him that few people seem able to resist. I am quite used to the look of smiling admiration on strangers' faces as they catch sight of him, and he himself is perfectly aware of his own attractions. He is popular with and welcomed by all my neighbours, whose houses he regards as his own.

Mac has none of his race's antipathy to postmen; on the contrary he welcomes them cordially, and one who takes the last night delivery is so highly esteemed by him that he insists on accompanying him for part of his rounds. A new postman appeared one evening and asked 'Where 's Mac?' 'Why, you've never seen him,' he was reminded. 'No,' he said, 'but I've heard such a lot about him from my mates at the office.' Perhaps it was the novelty of



*Photopress*

Anstey Guthrie with Mac  
The Last Photograph, 2 March 1933



finding one dog that did not look upon them as outcasts that had warmed their hearts to him.

Poor Garry had a mania for attacking dogs three or four times his size, Alsatians or Airedales for choice, which often made our walks more exciting than agreeable. Mac, on the other hand, has an immense admiration for all big dogs and wags his tail assiduously at them until they condescend to notice him.

So far as my observation goes Cairns are extremely clannish; as soon as one comes in sight of another their tails begin to wag; Pekes recognize Cairns as more nearly their social equals than any other breed. All other kinds of terriers either reserve their opinion of one another or dislike each other at first sight on principle.

Jock had the quality of exciting instant hatred in most other dogs without doing anything whatever to provoke it. But as he thoroughly enjoyed a fight at any odds this was no misfortune.

It never seems to occur to Mac that any dog could possibly have the bad taste to dislike him; he passes the time of day pleasantly with every one he meets and if he occasionally gets snubbed they invariably part without scrapping.

Mac is now three years old, but as yet has shown no amorous tendencies whatever. My first dog Bran, and my last Garry, had this peculiarity. On the whole Mac is a good little dog, but he has his faults. He is serenely self-willed; nothing on earth would induce him to do anything which he does not want to do. He follows well, but if he has fallen behind and I call him he never dreams of obeying until he has nothing else more pressing to do; he will look round with an expression signifying: 'All right, don't fuss. I'm coming. As soon as I've got this little matter off my mind.' And when he has satisfied his curiosity, but not before, he rejoins me with an air of leisurely self-assertion.

He is inclined to be a miser; he has the usual indestructible rubber ball, and on rare occasions he will bring it upstairs and order me to kick it for him, always fetching it and placing it in position for the next kick. But mostly he is so afraid that he may lose or be robbed of this precious possession that he hides it carefully in his basket.

And he is given to sulking; if, for instance, I have gone out and left him at home he shows his resentment by taking no notice of me on my return. But this is only when I have been away from him for a few hours. It is very different when I have been absent for some weeks. Country roads are too dangerous nowadays for small London dogs unless they are kept always on the lead, and it is no kindness to introduce them to the joys of country life under such restraint. And large rural dogs are apt on the "eave arf a brick" principle to be savage to imported breeds, and Mac's bland confidence in his personal charm might lead to his undoing. So, reluctantly enough, I go away without him, and as most dogs do, he divines from the portmanteaus what is in store for him, and it is a very sad little dog that I see in my housekeeper's arms as my taxi starts for the station.

I am told that he frets for days afterwards, searching for me all over the house and insisting on going into my bedroom as usual of a morning, when not finding me visible he hunts for me under the mattress on the chance that I may have mislaid myself there. Fortunately a dog soon forgets, and as my housekeeper is—as indeed all my housekeepers have been—knowledgeable with dogs, it is not long before Mac is happy again and getting more exercise than he would with any safety if he were with me.

And when I return it is to hear hysterical barks before the door is even opened, and then to be met with squeals of joy and frantic caresses that would assure me, if I needed assurance, that I have never been really forgotten.



He is still young, so I have a good hope that he will be with me to the end. I do not want to outlive another of my dogs.

[This last wish was granted, and little Mac survived his master for more than a year. Anstey Guthrie died of pneumonia at 24 Holland Park Road on Saturday, the 10th of March 1934, after a fortnight's illness. His ashes lie in Blatchington churchyard, in the grave of his friend and brother-in-law, George Millar. His epitaph has been taken from the last sentence of his own *The Giant's Robe*:

*A nature whose love was unselfish and chivalrous.]*



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<sup>1</sup> This list has been compiled, with acknowledgements, from the privately printed *Bibliography of the Works of F. Anstey*, by Martin John Turner, London, 1931.

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